

Implementing National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and Sustainable Rural Development in Nigeria.

By

Christie, O. Okoye

Department of Political Science

Faculty of Social Sciences

University of Jos

Jos – Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The paper examines the effects of poor implementation of National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) on sustainable rural development in Nigeria. Poverty, which is an aspect of gross social inequality, is mostly associated with developing nations, most especially the sub-Saharan African countries. These countries are characterised with low productive capacity, increase in population, low capital, inadequate education and joblessness. Nigeria being a developing country has, over the years, put in place a number of poverty alleviation programmes in order to achieve sustainable development especially in the rural areas. The paper therefore looks at the theoretical postulations on the right approach to poverty reduction. These include economic growth approach, basic need approach, rural development approach among others. The concept of rural development and its objectives were discussed. The method employed in data collection is secondary sources by way of textbook journals and other published materials. Information from the above sources were analysed and it was observed that factors that militated against the implementation of the programme are failure to focus on the poor, lack of access to resources, poor targeting mechanisms, programme inconsistency, corrupt practices etc. Based on the above, appropriate recommendations were made for effective programme implementation for sustainable rural development in Nigeria.

Introduction

Poverty is not new. It has existed in the world for some five thousand years (Eskor Toyo 2010:74). It is an aspect of gross social inequality. Since the end of the Second World War, the question of how to eradicate wide spread poverty, prevalent in the Less Developed Countries (LDCS), has become one of the key issues in development policy debates. On the basis of the realization that development is real only if it enables people to fully realize their potentials and that poverty constitutes a major hindrance to this. Considerable efforts have been made over the decades by Government and Development Institution such as the World Bank to understand the process by which poverty is generated in the LDCs and thus develop strategies that are appropriate and effective in eradicating and/or significantly reducing it (Adekunle Adebayo 2009:34).

Like many other African countries, the issue of poverty and how to eradicate it constitutes one of the critical challenges facing Nigeria today. Paradoxically, while the nation is richly endowed with resources, the degree of poverty among the people is alarming. Despite being the 6th largest exporter of oil in the world, the World Development Report (2002) puts Nigeria as the 28th poorest nation in the world, a situation the World Bank (1996) describes as poverty in the midst of plenty. According to Garba, (2006:3) in 1996, the poverty population in Nigeria was estimated at 66%. The result of the Nigerian Living Standard Survey (NLSS) conducted in 2003/2004 by the Federal Office of Statistics also puts the incidence of poverty at 54.4%, slightly down from the 1996 figure but still unacceptably high.

According to Federal Republic of Nigeria (2001), available statistical data from the United Nations, World Bank and Federal Office of Statistics have indicated that as at 1960, the poverty level in Nigeria, covered about 15 per cent of the population and rose to 28.0 percent in 1980. In 1985, it rose to the level of 46.0 percent and by 1996 and year 2000, it rose to 66 percent and 74.2 per cent, respectively.

Compared to other Third World Countries, Nigeria appeared to lag behind in terms of Human Development Index (HDI). For example, life expectancy at birth stood at 52 years in 1994 as against 57 year an 64 years in Ghana and Indonesia, respectively. In fact, mortality rate per thousand of live birth in Nigeria which was 99 in 1980, dropped to 78 in 1996. In the same period, the infant mortality rate decline from 70 to 36 in Indonesia and from 100 to 71 in Ghana, thus reflecting a greater improvement in the healthy living conditions of these countries compared to Nigeria (Ajakaiye and Adeyeye (2001).

In terms of access to safe water, the national picture from the Oxfam survey shows that only 54.1% of Nigerians have access to 'safe' water with 70.6 per cent of the population in urban areas as against 48% percent in the rural areas. UNDP (1998) survey report supports the above claim when it

maintains that the vast majority of the area in Nigeria experienced shortage of water supply.

As a result of the debilitating scourge of poverty, Nigerian governments, over the years have risen to reduce the rising profile of poverty, through series of policies and programmes. Among them are the National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) and the Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (NACB). These were floated by General Gowon in 1972. The Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) by Murtala and Obasanjo (1976); the Green Revolution, by Alhaji Shehu Shagari and a host of others. There is also the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) which is structured into four sector schemes. This was packaged by Obasanjo's regime.

Also, despite the enormous human and material resources put in place by governments to reduce poverty, the programmes expected to impact positively on the poor especially those in the rural area, have not achieved this goal. The paper therefore, seeks to find out why the NAPEP Programme has not impacted positively on rural development. The paper examines the concept of poverty in section two having introduced the work. Section three examines the National Poverty Eradication Programme, its blueprint and implementation strategies while section four dwells on theoretical postulations on the right approach to poverty reduction. Section five looks at rural development and its objectives while section six examines the factors that militate against the implementation of the programme and their effects on rural development. Section seven takes care of the conclusion and recommendations.

The Concept of Poverty.

Historically, poverty has been related to income, which remains at the core of the concept today. People can be said to be in poverty when they are deprived of income and other resources needed to obtain the conditions of life—the diet, material goods, amenities, standards and services that enable them play the roles, meet obligations and participate in the relationships and customs of their society.

There exists considerable argument among development actors and economists as to the appropriate definition of poverty and no general consensus exists on the issue. Generally, poverty is usually seen as connoting a situation in which the standard of living is considerably lower than an acceptable norm. The norm is either a certain level of income, expenditure, consumption, and participation in community life.

The Overseas Development Administration, ODA (1995:37) states that poverty is often described as a state or condition of living in which people have little or no money, assets or means of support. Poverty can also be viewed with particular reference to basic human needs which the individual must have in order to survive. The family may be said to live in poverty when

it is unable to satisfy its basic needs. The basic needs concept, in its restricted sense, is concerned with food, clothing and shelter. Basic needs may also include clean air and water, adequate and balanced diet, emotional and physical security, climatically appropriate clothing and shelter, (Burkey, 1993:3). Also, Obikeze and Anthony (2004:213) see poverty as an absence of capacity to acquire the means to sustain a living or live above the poverty line. According to them, the socio-economic indicators to watch include the followings: education, demography, health and nutrition, income, employment, the environment and the performance of the informal sector.

Conceptually, three dominant views exist in the literature on the meaning of poverty (Oyeranti and Olayiwola, 2005). The first perspective considers poverty in terms of deprivation in some materials of well being which can usually be assessed in terms of money. On this basis, the World Bank (1990) defines poverty as the inability to attain a minimal standard of living while Ravallion and Bidani (1996) view poverty as a lack of command over basic consumption need and World Bank (2002) sees it as the lack of what is necessary for material well-being. In this case, the minimal standard of living or basic consumption need connotes a certain level of income, consumption or expenditure. The second view considers poverty as being multidimensional in nature, entailing lack of adequate livelihood, assets and failure to achieve basic capabilities in nutrition, health, economic and social life etc. Recently, therefore, poverty is seen as a consequence of deprivation, lack of rights and entitlements to assets and resources, insufficient capabilities such as skills and good health and socio-economic exclusion mechanisms including lack of access to active involvement in community's life in all its ramifications. This view opines that the conceptualisation of poverty covers both the primary basic needs (food, clothing, shelter) and the secondary basic needs (economic, social and cultural rights, liberty, freedom, property rights, access to productive assets and employment etc) of man, the lack of which leads to a state of want, powerlessness and helplessness, despair and inability to protect oneself against economic, social, cultural and political discrimination, deprivation and marginalization (Deng, 1995).

A third view sees poverty as a phenomenon that is difficult to objectively determine. In other words, it is subjective in nature and has both physical and psychological dimensions that predispose its sufferers to hunger, violence and crime, insecurity, discrimination, victimization, political repression etc. This view therefore sees poverty as a concept that can be best described by the poor themselves and the communities in which they live in.

So, given the present understanding that poverty has both material and non-material dimensions, it is now generally considered that a sustainable approach to poverty reduction depends on the interaction of a wide range of policy measures cutting across diverse targets and dimensions.

National Poverty Eradication Programme, its Blueprint and Implementation Strategies.

In the year 2001, government put in place a National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). The programme was aimed at eradicating poverty in Nigeria by the year 2010 (Aliyu 2001). National Poverty Eradication Council (NAPEC) was also established in order to ensure proper coordination and strengthening of the implementation of the programme. The federal government therefore provided a blueprint which has the following features.

- i. Adoption of participatory bottom-up-approach in programme implementation and monitoring.
- ii. Provides rational framework which lays emphasis on appropriate and sustainable institutional arrangement.
- iii. Provides for pro-active and affirmative actions, deliberately targeted at women, youth, farmers and disabled.
- iv. Provides for inter-ministerial and inter-agency cooperation.
- v. Provides for the participation of all registered political parties, traditional rulers and the communities.
- vi. Provides for technology acquisition and development particularly for agriculture and industries.
- vii. Provides for capacity building for existing skill acquisition and training centres
- viii. Provides for agricultural and industrial extension services to rural areas.
- ix. Provides for institutional development for marketing of agricultural and industrial products.
- x. Provides for integrated schemes for youth empowerment, development of infrastructure, provision of social welfare services and exploitation of natural resources (Aliyu, 2005).

Implementation Strategies.

The major executors of the above are the ministries. The activities of the ministries have been classified into four schemes. This is for a coordinated implementation and monitoring of the programme.

1. Youth Empowerment Scheme which consists of capacity acquisition programme, mandatory attachment programme and credit delivery programme.
2. Rural Infrastructure Development which consists of quality transport programme, rural energy programme, and rural communication programme.
3. Social Welfare Service Scheme which includes quality education programme, primary health care programme, farmers' empowerment programme and social services programme.
4. National Resources Development and Conservation Scheme which is made up of agricultural resources programme, water resource

programme, solid minerals resources programme and environmental protection programme.

In order to achieve effective implementation of these schemes, structures were established. They are;

- i. **National Poverty Eradication Council (NAPEC)** which is the highest body for policy formulation, coordination, monitoring and review of poverty eradication activities within the country.
- ii. **National Assessment and Evaluation Committee (NAEC)**- this has the responsibility for regular and continuous monitoring of all poverty eradication efforts in Nigeria.
- iii. **The National Coordination Committee (NCC)**. This Committee is charged with the responsibility of executing the directives of the Council and ensures that the activities of implementing ministries and agencies are fully coordinated to achieve set targets.
- iv. **NAPEC Secretariat**: This provides services to facilitate the operations of the Council and the federal coordinating Committee.
- v. **State Coordination Committee**: This coordinates and supervises the execution of all poverty eradication programmes of the federal government in their respective state.
- vi. **Local Government Monitoring Committee (LGMC)**: They are empowered to carry out regular field monitoring exercise. They report to the state coordinating committee.

Theoretical Postulations and the Right Approach to Poverty Reduction.

According to Obadan (1997), approaches to poverty reduction have been grouped into two-Economic Growth and Non-growth strategies. The economic growth strategy focuses on some macro and micro economic policies and programmes that would ensure rapid growth of the economy. It sees economic growth as crucial and driving force for job creation, income generation and inequality/poverty reduction. The non-growth strategies contain a wide variety of social policies and strategies aimed at human capital development, safety nets provision, basic social services, basic needs provision, rural development, employment and public works programmes, good governance, local institutions development etc.

A second view grouped poverty reduction strategies into four types (Ogwuiké, 2002) based on the methodology adopted for poverty reduction. These are

- i. **Economic Growth Approach**. This focuses on ensuring growth especially through increased focus on human capital formation via education, health, nutrition and housing needs of the labour force.
- ii. **Basic Needs Approach**: This lays emphasis on the provision of basic needs such as food, shelter, water, sanitation, health care, basic education etc.

- iii. **Rural Development Approach:** This sees poverty as mainly a rural phenomenon and that traditional measures of poverty reduction may not work in the rural areas because of its peculiarities. The approach therefore, recommends a multi-dimensional, multi-pronged, integrated approach to poverty reduction through development programmes that provide basic needs and creates income generating opportunities for rural dwellers in general and the poor in particular.
- iv. **Targeting Approach:** This favours directing poverty alleviation programmes to specific groups like women, the disabled, youth etc within a society. It emphasizes social safety nets, micro credit provision, targeted food programme etc.

A Third perspective dwells on the mechanisms for implementation of poverty reduction programme. In this view, four approaches are put in place.

- i. **Pro-poor Growth Approach:** This approach aims at ensuring macroeconomic policy that are favourable to the poor to ensure stability of the economy, good business climate, growth enhancing, technological innovation and improved output leading to increased earnings for the people especially the poor.
- ii. **Rights Based Approaches:** These rely on empowerment and redistribution of political power. They emphasize issues relating to improve political participation, good governance, accountability and rule of law, skill enhancement, credit availability etc.
- iii. **Resource Based Approach:** This focuses on redistribution of assets. They promote security against social risks such as ill health, natural disasters and provide social and physical infrastructures. They emphasize things like salaries/wages review, gender equality, public works programmes and institution of safety nets for the poor.
- iv. **Sustainable Livelihoods Approach:** This is a people focused. It combines the features of all the previous approaches. It aims at development that is pro-poor, pro-nature, pro-jobs, pro-women and pro-children, rights and empowerment enhancing, inequality reducing, resources redistributing and sustainable development focused. Unlike other approaches, it perceives that the poor are imbued with agency and as such, poverty eradication programmes will only be effective if it complements rather than supplement their current livelihood strategies (Gester, 2000).

Based on the various classifications above, this work adopts Obadan's economic growth and Ogwuiké's rural development approach as framework of analysis. These are vital to poverty reduction. Growth generates the increasing resources that are necessary for increasing levels of consumption and well-being. Without growth, the exact levels of living are unsustainable. Also, the review reveals that growth by itself is insufficient for poverty reduction redistributive efforts aimed at the disadvantaged segments of the

society either to provide them with basic means of survival and substance or to improve their capacity to provide these for themselves which are equally important. Also, sustainable livelihood approach is adopted for implementation.

Rural Development and Its Objectives in Nigeria.

Rural development is largely concerned with raising the quality of life of people living in the rural areas through nutrition, housing, health, education as well as creating opportunities for employment. It involves a deep and sustained commitment to the qualitative improvement in the social, economic, political and ecological well being of rural dwellers. The World Bank (1995) sees rural development as a strategy designed to improve the economic and social conditions of a specific group of people – the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek livelihood in the rural area.

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) views rural development as the improvement of living conditions in rural areas through the increased productivity of agricultural and related enterprise. If rural development is to benefit the lower income earners, equitable and fair distribution of the wealth as created, must take into account the need to maintain a balance between individual consumption and development in communal social services (Mboho and Joshua 2009:320).

From the above definitions, rural development is therefore, concerned with the reduction of the inequalities in income and employment, access to public goods and services and the alleviation of poverty.

Objectives of Rural Development.

Rural development objectives vary, depending inter-alia, upon the factor(s) motivating a government to embark upon it – the historical period (colonial or independent) in the life of a country during which the policy is embarked upon, the sponsor's influence and the proportion of the regarded as poor etc.

In all these, a few common objectives often declared in nearly all instances include

- (a) The development and increase of the productivity of the agricultural sector
- (b) The stemming of the tide of migration of youths particularly, from rural to urban area in search of non-existing jobs by creating rural-based employment opportunities
- (c) The improvement of the well-being of rural dwellers through the provision of basic needs infrastructures like water, light shelter, health, educational and communication facilities

- (d) The reduction of poverty and inequality in rural areas via such anti-poverty policies like land reforms, increased local participation, population control and food security
- (e) The amelioration of regional development imbalance through a policy of locating public owned industries in rural areas and generally integrating the rural areas into the overall national development.

Factors Militating Against Implementation of Poverty Alleviation Programme and their Effects on Rural Development.

i. Failure to Focus on the Poor.

One of the areas regarded as complementary targets for poverty reduction strategies is human capital development (Obadan 1997:10-17). This entails investing in people's education, health and nutrition. It creates knowledge, increases skills and improves health and thereby constitutes a key to sustainable economic development, raising living standards and enriching people's lives.

Among the mechanism for implementing poverty reduction programme is the pro-poor growth approach. This approach aims at ensuring macro-economic policy that are favourable to the poor to ensure stability of the economy, conducive business climate, growth enhancing technological innovation and improved output leading to increased earnings for the people, especially the poor. The democratic era policy (1999-date) is mainly a growth based on policy. However, while it is clear that growth is indeed vital to poverty reduction, it has also been observed that growth can be retarded where deliberate efforts are not taken to make growth pro-poor. The pro-poor growth refers to growth that enables the poor actively participate in the significantly benefits from the economy (Osinubi 2003:9). This, no doubt leads to sustainable rural development.

ii. Lack of Access to Resources.

According to NAPEP Programme, a key factor for ensuring a sustainable way of life is a more equitable distribution of physical asset (land) and greater access to the means of production (credit and information). The important issue in this regard is the protection of property rights for goods and physical assets. Very often, many of the poorest farmers in rural areas lack clear title to the land on which they work. This affects mainly women and it is still seen in most of our rural areas where agricultural activities take place. The programme has failed to address that aspect of quest for sustainable rural development. This is because, if the aspect of the programme to grant them access is implemented, there would be the dual advantage of strengthening their incentives to increase output and also facilitate their participation in the economic progress of the rural areas. Also, greater equality of access to credit is important in that it is one of the most powerful

means of opening market to the poor and thereby sustaining rural development.

iii. Poor Targeting Mechanisms.

One of the blue prints for effective implementation of NAPEP was to provide for inter-ministerial and inter-agency cooperation. It should collaborate with states, local government, the private sectors, religious bodies and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to reduce unemployment by creating jobs. However, apart from its renting tricycle to young Nigeria's for transport business, there have not been serious and identifiable efforts at empowering the beneficiaries with enduring skills. Also, there have not been observable attempts at embarking on extensive farm settlements and elaborate agricultural programmes. This is contrary to one of the blueprints which states - "to provide for capacity building for existing skill acquisition and training centres". This is for youth empowerment. It is also in line with what the sustainable livelihood approach preaches "...right and empowerment enhancing, skill acquisition, resource distribution and sustainable development, especially in the rural areas".

iv. Programme Inconsistency.

Political and Policy interference have undermined the institution's credibility and effectiveness. This means that their instability have resulted in frequent policy changes and inconsistent implementation which turn out to prevent continuous progress. NAPEP top ranking officers are political appointees and therefore subject to political loyalties to those who appointed them. So, it is still the usual "top-down approach" and not "bottom-up approach" which is contained in the blueprint of the programme- "adoption of participatory bottom-up approach in programme implementation and monitoring."

v. Poor Implementation.

The severe budgetary and governance problems afflicted the full implementation of the programmes. It has resulted in projects either not being completed or broken down or abandoned. Also, inappropriate programme and lack of involvement of beneficiaries in the implementation of the programme constitute problem. This has resulted to unsuccessful implementation of the programme. This also affects sustainable rural development in Nigeria.

vi. Corrupt Practices

Over the years, corrupt practices have bedeviled various anti-poverty programmes in Nigeria-NAPEP programme inclusive. The manifestations and problems associated with corruption have various outcomes. Among them are project substitution, misrepresentation of project, finances, diversion of resources and misappropriation of public funds for personal use. As observed, lack of accountability and transparency made the programmes serve as conduct pipes for draining national resources. Thus the resultant effects of

corrupt practices on the implementation of NAPEP programme, have directly affected sustainable rural development in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The eradication of poverty is universally accepted as a primary objective for sustainable rural development. The prevalence of mass poverty in Nigeria despite decades of anti-poverty programmes, shows inappropriateness of the implementation strategies.

The paper examines the theoretical postulations on the right approach to poverty reduction and adopts Sustainable Livelihood Approach as the suitable one for analysing the work. It also adopted the pro-poor growth approach as a yardstick for assessing implementation of the programme.

Information gathered show that failure to focus on the poor, lack of access to resources, poor targeting mechanism, programme inconsistency, poor programme implementation and corrupt practice among others, militated against the implementation of NAPEP programme and thereby resulted to lack of sustainable rural development.

Based on the above observed factors, we hereby recommend as follows:

1. That sustainable livelihoods approach, which is people focused and combined the features of all the previous approaches and which posits that development is pro-poor, pro-nature, pro-jobs, pro-women and children, rights and empowerment enhancing, inequality reducing, resources redistribution and sustainable rural development, be adopted for effective implementation of NAPEP programme for sustainable rural development in Nigeria.
2. That the rural poor must make input when the present NAPEP policy will be revised and they must also be involved during its implementation. This will be in line with Bottom-up-Approach which is one on the blueprints of the programme.
3. That consistency in project implementation must be encouraged even when leadership changes.
4. That corrupt practices must be discouraged for effective programme implementation. Accountability, transparency and good governance must be encouraged. This will go a long way toward effective implementation of NAPEP programme for sustainable rural development in Nigeria.

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