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**Going Beyond Mass media Use for Social Mobilisation in Meeting Targets of Poverty
Alleviation Programmes in Nigeria**

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Abstract

It is fashionable that successive governments in Nigeria never lack articulate programmes aimed at ameliorating poverty neither do they grossly lack resources to leverage on. It is also fashionable that at every dispensation, governments at all levels overwhelmingly deploy the mass media to mobilise citizens to embrace poverty reduction programmes considered germane for citizens' socio-economic enhancement. Paradoxically, the level of poverty among the average Nigerian is on the increase. This concern informs this paper with a view to reflecting on the sustained causes and consequences of poverty, the place of poverty reduction programmes and reasons numerous poverty reduction programmes. With the conclusion that the programmes fail due to government insincerity rather than inadequate social mobilisation, it is recommended that Nigerian government should take a holistic approach with renewed rigour as viable option for successful implementation of poverty reduction programmes.

Key words: *Mass media, poverty, poverty alleviation programmes, social mobilisation, corruption*

Introduction

Governments all over the world have recognised the fact that there exists a social malady known as poverty. Poverty arises as a result of a nation's inability to tap its resources, human or material. Where resources are exploited they are not channelled towards meeting developmental goals due to unequal distribution of wealth. Citizens of poverty-ridden countries are prone to such dire consequences like malnutrition, high rate of illiteracy and ignorance, mounting cases of crime, unemployment problems, and high incidents of epidemics. According to Hodges (2001), these features, which are parts of the social reality of the poor, "tend to be mutually reinforcing, trapping the poor in a vicious cycle." Countries that are most hit are the developing ones where citizens' standard of living is low.

There has been steady rise in the level of poverty among developing countries including Nigeria. According to Ogbeide and Agu (2015), poverty rates in Nigeria increased from 27.2 percent in 1980 to 42.7 percent in 2004 and further to 65.6 percent in 2010. Aidelunuoghene (2014) maintained that poverty has risen in Nigeria with about 112 million Nigerians - about 67.1% of the country's total population of 167 million living below poverty level. To confront this ill headlong, policies and programmes are evolved from time to time with little or no success. In comparative terms, Kanayo (2014) argued that although the level of poverty in urban area is lower than that of rural area, poverty in the urban area has been on the increase. In 1996, 2004 and 2010; poverty level in urban area was 69.3%, 63.3% and 70%, respectively (CBN 2011). This increase in urban poverty has continued and may be associated to the upsurge of rural-urban migration in search of better living conditions. In all these, the lack of sustainability in the poverty alleviation methods has been made the culprit (Kanayo, 2015).

Traversing the historical lane of Nigeria, citizens have experienced series of short-lived policies and programmes aimed at poverty reduction which Onimode (2003) cited in Oyeranti and Olayiwola (2005) argued, are economic policies that have semblance of positive policy initiatives on rural poverty reduction, but did not live up to expectation. These include the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution (GR), Vision 2010 (later Vision 2020), Poverty Alleviation, Poverty Reduction, National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Directorate

for Food Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P)(not in that order) among others.

At every point various media have been intensively deployed to mobilise people to embrace all forms of policies and programmes. In Nigeria, agencies are even mandated to interface with the mass media for the mobilisation agenda. An example is Mass Mobilisation for Self Reliance and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) which has been substituted with the current National Orientation Agency (NOA). To actualise this, huge sums of money have also been invested but with no meaningful impact.

This work, thus, illuminates the concept of poverty and social mobilisation. It also treats causes and consequences of poverty as well as media effectiveness in shaping public perception on the poverty amelioration programmes. Attempt will also be made to examine factors militating against the success of the programmes in spite of media blitz to create acceptability. Efforts shall be made to recommend palliative measures with a view to alleviating poverty in Nigeria.

Review of Concepts

Poverty - Definitions of poverty are numerous but in substance they are analogous in the sense that all of them revolve around quality of life. For the purpose of this work, we shall examine few of them. The World Bank (2011) defined poverty as economic condition in which people lack sufficient income to obtain certain minimal levels of health services, food, housing, clothing and education which are necessities for standard of living. In his definition Cousins (2007) sounded descriptive thus:

People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and other resources people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society (p.4).

The common denominator here is that a condition exists for poverty to thrive and that is lack of resources. This applies to Nigeria where even when available resources are exploited, distribution is not properly done to include those who find themselves in abject poverty and perpetually find life unbearable.

While attempting to provide a working definition of poverty, the European Commission (2001) suggested that poverty should not be defined merely as a lack of income and financial resources. It should also include the deprivation of basic capabilities and lack of access to education, health, natural resources, employment, land and credit, political participation, services, and infrastructure. This definition can be broadened to cover state of being deprived of the information needed to participate in the wider society locally, nationally or globally. Capitalising on the European Commission's definition, the World Bank (2000) added risk and vulnerability, as well as voicelessness and powerlessness to the fold. But the bottom line still hinges on money. This fact is buttressed by Sen (1999), who surmised that people with high income could afford life's necessities and luxuries; but inadequate income is a strong predisposing condition for an impoverished life.

Ugoh and Ukpere (2009) cited Hettne (2002) averred that poverty is classified into five types. First, absolute poverty that occurs when human beings live in a state of deprivation due to meagre income or lack of access to basic human needs which include food, safe water, sanitation, health, shelter, education and information. Second, relative poverty defines poverty from a comparative point of view, that is, poverty is not absolute but relative. Relative refers to the position of household or individual compared. It is measured in three ways: through the low income family statistics; through income and through disposable income. Third, chronic/structural which means that poverty is persistent or long term. Its causes are more permanent and depend on a host of factors such as limited productive resources, lack of skill for gainful employment, vocational disadvantage or endemic socio-political and cultural factors. Fourth, conjectural transitory which means poverty is temporary or short-term and caused mainly by factors such as natural or man-made disasters – wars and environmental degradation or structural changes induced by policy reforms which result in loss of employment, loss in value of

real income assets, etc. Fifth, spatial/location means depending on geographical or regional spread and incidence. It involves urban squalor/poverty typified by the existence of ghettos, slums and shanties in metropolitan cities and characterized by environmental degradation, inadequate welfare services and social deprivations, low per-capita income, over-crowded accommodation, engagement in informal business, rural poverty characterized by poor conditions of living.

Poverty Alleviation

Poverty alleviation involves improving the living conditions of people who are already poor (Oseni, Ogunlade, Oyetunji, & Sanni, 2012). This means making deliberate efforts geared at ameliorating human suffering. This conscious effort has to be championed by the leadership to make citizens discover their potentials and contribute towards improving their means of livelihood. Ugoh and Ukpere (2009) emphasised that improvement of socio-economic condition should be broad based across sectors and regions and inclusive of the large part of the workforce that poor men and women make up. Also, policies for sustaining growth such as those aiming at strengthening institutional capacity, promoting democratic and effective governance should increase poor people's incentives, opportunities and capabilities for employment so they can participate in and benefit from growth.

Social Mobilisation

According to Stanislaw (1989, p.75) social mobilisation is a "multi-faceted, dynamic process involving the diffusion of information and sharing of experiences with various societal forces in order to stimulate, educate and involve them in specific social goals." In more precise terms social mobilisation entails a process by which people are made aware of the resources at their disposal and are also motivated and collectively energised to utilise such resources for the improvement of their well-being. That is probably why Udokah cited in Nwodu and Ukozor (2003) conceived mobilisation as the awakening or activation of the dominant consciousness of a greater number of people with the use of views, ideas for the purpose of gaining their support for an action or inaction. Nwodu and Ukozor (2003) further stated that mobilisation is a process of building and sustaining cohesive alliance between development agents and targets or

beneficiaries of a given developmental programme as well as serving their support and participation in the programme. This portends that social mobilisation is an efficient means of alleviating poverty on a wide scale, using methods based on the exploitation of assets.

Mass media – These are means by which information, ideas, and messages reach out to people. Raufu (2003) defined mass media as the modern means of giving information to a large number of people. The use of the word “modern” expands the restrictive classification of traditional media structures of broadcast media (radio, cinema, television) and print media (newspapers, magazines, journals, books, pamphlets and other periodicals) to include internet and social media platforms.

Theoretical Framework

The study is forged on the anvil of Marxist theory of the post-colonial state. The justification for using this theory is based on the assumption that it has the advantage of interpreting the political behaviour of the governing class in the socio-economic and public policies that influence human behaviour in the society.

Marxist theory of post-colonial state postulates that the state exists to preserve the existing social and political order. This order is not neutral. Instead it is an order in which some people dominate and exploit others and in which some classes appropriate the labour of others. This finds expression in the words of Abbass (2010) cited in Shaapera (2012) that the State is being oriented, controlled and directed by the ruling class, purposely used to dominate the other classes in the State.

Ake (2001) cited in Okoye (2011) noted that colonial rule left most African countries a legacy of intense and lawless political competition amidst an ideological void and a rising tide of disenchantment with the expectation of a better life. This implies, even with political independence, our leaders maintain the colonial orientation of simply posturing as lords that deprive citizens of means of livelihood. Thus, “Nigerian attention is paid to the appropriation and expropriation of the resources meant to be devoted to the improvement of the welfare of the masses” (Okoye, 2011, p.37). Unemployment, infrastructure decay, labour unrest, massive

corruption, executive lawlessness, food insecurity of lives and property amongst other vices becomes the order of the day.

On account that Nigerian state is an instrument for primitive capital accumulation, despite the extensive use of media for social mobilisation, government officials do not prudently allocate resources budgeted for poverty reduction programmes. The likelihood is that resources end up in private pockets and this makes it imperative for citizens to want to comprehend for instance the circumstances that make it difficult for government to implement its poverty reduction programmes.

Literature Review

At the heart of mobilisation is the application of media to create awareness about a programme or policy. The imperative of media use for social mobilisation rests on the fact that people may not be aware of the existence of a critical programme in the first place. Mefalopulos (2008) elaborated that “the various media are used to raise awareness on hot development issues” (p.5). In creating the desired awareness, media also influence specific audiences and garner support for the intended programme.

Nigeria has incorporated a social mobilisation component into its poverty eradication process. For example, activities are designed to educate Nigerians about the importance of vaccinating their children against the polio virus, and to motivate them to do so. These activities, include training, advocacy, education, and communication materials, which are implemented at the national, state, local, district, and village/household levels. Similarly, Nigerians have been educated on best agricultural practices. Emphasis here is on the use of improved variety of crops and techniques of production. In the same fashion, artisans stand to benefit from different trades through information carefully packaged and presented by the media. This underscores the goal of the intervention of FAO's World Agricultural Information Centre (WAICENT) Outreach Programme which is:

...to enhance the ability of individuals and communities in member countries to improve the efficiency, quality, and relevance of information and knowledge exchange among the various stakeholder groups involved in agricultural development and food security, with a focus on the most vulnerable and deprived groups(cited in FAO, 2000, p. 1).

Even advanced societies depend greatly on the mass media in particular to deliver information with a view to improving the economic, cultural and social well-being of citizens. It is on the basis of this, Kreps and Thornton (1992, p. 144) believed mass media extend “people’s ability to communicate, to speak to others far, to hear messages and see images that would be unavailable without media.” The use of media to pass information about poverty alleviation programmes is most appreciated when one looks at the potency of their education and advocacy role for social concerns. As advocacy tools, the media assist leaders in setting policy agenda and getting support for particular view point. By virtue of the agenda-setting, the media magnify the impacts of development initiatives by involving and engaging the listening audience to solve problems. The effectiveness of the media, however, depends on their appropriate choice and use. For example, the best media to be used could be rural media in which messages are presented mostly in vernacular to meet the information needs of the illiterate and semi-literate people.

The Directorate of food,Roads and rural infrastructure (DFRRI) was successful because the role of ruralcommunity media as a vital tool in grass roots mobilization was highly recognized. This prompted Akinfeleye (1993) cited in Akpor (2013)to suggest that “With this very high level of responsibilities the Directorate offood, road, and Rural Infrastructure must maintain constantdialogue with the ruralities so that their programmes will havecommunity support” (p. 30).

Nevertheless, the complexities in mass media could stand as obstacles to message delivery if care is not taken. Such complexities could be inappropriate media selection and poor definition of target audience. Perhaps, this informed Winett and Wallack (1996, p.173) to posit that using the mass media to improve public well-being“can be like navigating a vast network of roads without any street signs – if you are not sure where you are going and why, chances are

you will not reach your destination.” This is why the right media and message have to be used for the right audience who are defined on the basis of their demographics and psychographics.

Due to the nature and manner of population distribution in Nigeria on basis of geographic, economic, and social status, there is knowledge gap. This means mass media are unfortunately insufficient for distribution of information in an egalitarian fashion. Hence, the complementary role of other media like interpersonal communication leveraged by opinion leaders. Those community opinion leaders scan the mass media for information, then, communicate that information to others in interpersonal contexts.

A strong limitation to social mobilisation for poverty alleviation is abject poverty. Even with the bountiful promises of the media as effective tools of mobilisation, Stanley (1993, p.139) noted that “you cannot mobilise a hungry, jobless and frustrated person. Neither can you orientate or influence a person, who to all intents and purposes, has no sense of belonging because he is discriminated against.” This introduces a dimension to effort towards poverty reduction which is extreme poverty; a manifestation of misdeeds of government officials. Viewed this way, media use for social mobilisation could be effective. However, certain forces that create or exacerbate poverty undermine the effectiveness of mass media messages.

The causes of poverty in the country had variously been traced to corruption, ignorance and illiteracy as well as bad governance. Arogundade, Adebisi and Ogunro (2011) added debt, unemployment, low productivity, burgeoning population growth, globalization, unfocused government policies and lack of effective skills training.

Corruption has to do with mismanagement of national resources which leads to depletion of national treasury. Depletion of resources by corrupt political office-holders, triggers difficult-to-manage vices like advance fee fraud (419 scam) and rising crime rate, which discourage investment in the economy and lowers productivity, thereby exacerbating the poverty profile of Nigeria.

On the plank of ignorance and illiteracy, the greater percentage of people lives below poverty line. NEEDS Nigeria (2004, p.20) underscore this by describing the development as “a paradox: about two-thirds of Nigerian people are poor, despite living in a country with vast

potential wealth.”They cannot, therefore, afford to receive education which is an imperative for improvement of their means of livelihood. Because they are illiterate, they lack the basic knowledge of living a healthy life neither do they have the capacity to challenge their leaders. This worrisome situation leads us to the issue of bad governance.

Diamond (2004) cited in Innocent, Eikojonwa, and Enojo (2014, p.100) made insight into the issue of bad governance that, “the deepest root cause of poverty is not lack of resources or international isolation. Rather, it is a lack of good governance – the instability or unwillingness to apply public resources effectively to generate public goods.” Public goods include physical structures such as roads, bridges, ports, sanitation, potable water, electricity, public transport, telecommunication; social, economic. Others are political infrastructure– schools, clinics, markets, courts, vaccination programmes, improved agricultural techniques, neutral and capable state of bureaucracy.

Our leaders work with unfocused policies and by extension, programmes. They also lack checks and balances. Husain (1999) rightly observed that there exists a bureaucratic class that unquestioningly implements the wishes of leaders on passive and subverting population. With the exploitative tendency of the private sector, people are only left with the option to thrive on nongovernmental organisations. Unfortunately, in Nigeria reliable and established nongovernmental organisations are grossly lacking.

Arising from the causes of poverty are serious psychological, social and economic consequences. Amongst them are those outlined below by Combat Poverty Agency (2002):

Money and Debt: Many people who work in low-paid or insecure employment earn a wage that is not adequate to cover the basic costs of living for themselves and their families. Others are dependent on social welfare payments, whether because they are elderly, unemployed, a lone parent, or have a disability or long-term illness. When people find themselves unable to make ends meet on a low income, they often get into debt. For many people in poverty, access to mainstream financial services can be difficult, so they are more likely to borrow from moneylenders who charge a far higher rate of interest than banks or credit unions.

Education: Growing up in poverty can affect people's future. Children who grow up in poor families are more likely to leave school early and without qualifications, and to end up unemployed or in low-paid jobs - which means that they are more likely to be poor as adults.

Health: People who live in poverty are at greater risk of poor mental and physical health: they get sick more often and die younger than people who are better-off. Factors such as an inadequate diet, a higher rate of chronic illness, a lower level of participation in sport and leisure activities, and a generally lower quality of life all contribute to lower levels of health and well-being among people who experience poverty.

Housing: People in poverty are more likely to be dependent on the State to meet their housing needs, whether through subsidised private-rented accommodation or social housing. They are also at greater risk of living in sub-standard accommodation and of becoming homeless.

Social Exclusion: Poverty can prevent people from participating as equals in society, from feeling part of their community and from developing their skills and talents. This process is often called *social exclusion*. For children growing up in poor families, poverty can mean not having the things their friends have, not being able to go on school trips, or having to get a part-time job to support the family. This can often lead to problems like bullying because poverty makes it harder to fit in.

Surprisingly, the causes and consequences of poverty are perennially echoed in successive administrations. Yet no conscientious efforts have been made to ameliorate poverty to the minimum. Probably, this inclined former President of Nigeria, Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida when he said in 1990 that, "we have never really lacked good development plans and programmes. Our greatest problem has been how to creatively translate such good plans and programmes into concrete action on ground" (cited in Odunlami, 1999, p. 47).

Need for an enduring Poverty Alleviation Programme

A large number of impoverished Nigerians live in rural areas. This segment of people is predominantly illiterate and is sparsely distributed. They, therefore, lack knowledge about government programmes aimed at alleviating poverty hence the need for specific programmes

deliberately designed to address poverty among the rural populace. But since other Nigerians living in urban centres are also poor, poverty alleviation programmes have to include those in urban centres too. In any case, target population either in rural or urban settings need to be mobilised to appreciate poverty alleviation programmes. This is why Akpor (2013) is of the view that social mobilisation is traditionally a community-based or country-level action.

In attempt to address the malaise of poverty, successive governments have resorted to series of poverty reduction programmes. These programmes were designed to spearhead government's ambitious programme of eradicating absolute poverty; a condition where a person or group of persons are unable to satisfy their most basic requirements for survival in terms of food, clothing, shelter, health, transport, education and recreation among Nigerians. However, almost all the programmes fall below expectations. The basis for non-performance of these programmes could be traced to several surmountable factors. Ovie and Akpomuvie (2011, p.297) pointed out that "Nigeria has a per capita income of about US\$310 and a human development index of 0.4. The levels of poverty are so high at individual and household levels that an increasing number of Nigerians are finding it difficult to eat and clothe themselves. Such Nigerians also find it difficult to afford decent shelter." Consequently, Heobink (2000) cited in Orji (2005) stated that poverty alleviation is now embedded in a broader macro-economic and macro-political approach involving good governance and attention to the social sector. Good governance refers to democratization and improvement of the human rights situation.

Nigeria's pathetic poverty situation amidst rich resources endowment coupled with efforts to alleviate it has been summarized by Ali-Akpajiak and Pyke (2003) that all documentation, official or otherwise shows that poverty in Nigeria in all forms is rising at an increasingly fast pace. Ali-Akpajiak and Pyke (2003, p.6) submitted that:

Nigeria's social statistics rank it among the worst in south Saharan Africa even though it possesses the greatest natural resources... Given that Nigeria is the seventh largest exporter of oil in the world, these revelations are distressing... The poverty profile of Nigeria does indeed present a very sombre picture of a rich nation in decline.

Poverty is, therefore, a major development problem in Nigeria. Despite the fact that each year, national budgets are prepared and certain programmes are specifically designed with recourse to poverty reduction, poverty continues to soar. Innocent, Eikojonwa and Enojo (2014, p.98) poignantly declared that "poverty has made Nigeria to attain an unenviable status as one of the poorest countries in the world." This is why it is necessary to strengthen existing poverty alleviation programmes or embark on ones that will endure potential threats.

Successes of Previous Poverty Alleviation Programmes

Against the backdrop of the fact that numerous poverty alleviation programmes have been adopted in Nigeria, it is necessary to collectively examine the success of these programmes. This will go a long way to reveal the effectiveness of the programmes in alleviating poverty in such areas and the nation at large.

Like any other government initiative the poverty reduction programmes have recorded some measure of successes in diverse ways. According to Abimiku (2006), some scholars have equally alluded to and in some cases supporting such claims indirectly. Abimiku (2006) went on to advance instances when the programmes proved effective based on his findings thus:

For example, Ogwumike (2001) opined that the National Directorate of Employment has continued to articulate labour-intensive programmes aimed at curbing the nation's unemployment problems, while Aderibigbe (2001) said that between 1990 and 2000, People's Bank advanced a total credit of 349.5 million to the poor. On his part, Addison (1996) said programmes established in the country after 1986 have not only contributed significantly to economic progress but have led to reduction in the nation's poverty incidence (p. 75).

On his part, Ovie and Akpomuvie (2011, p.301) maintained:

The 2000s saw the emergence of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Schemes, Mass Adult Literacy Programmes and Primary Health care Programme. The government was determined to create more jobs for about 200,000 unemployed persons and stimulate production within the period of one year. Within the same period, the government recognized that about 70 percent of Nigerians are poor in real terms and earmarked 50 percent of Poverty Alleviation Programmes (PAP) jobs for youths; 25 percent for women and the remaining 25 percent for the men, with special preference for the destitute and disabled persons.

Ovie and Akpomuvie (2011) further stated that the jobs thus created were spread among states at (5000 persons each) while the balance of 15,000 was shared among thickly populated cities. In addition, Poverty Alleviation Programme participants were paid monthly stipends of N3500 each.

Another interventionist programme was Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP). During its two years of existence (1998 – 2000), FEAP received funding to the tune of N7 billion out of which about N3.3 billion was disbursed as loans to about 21,000 cooperative societies nationwide that were production oriented. Such projects targeted for assistance included poultry production, garri making, soap making and animal husbandry.

In the same vein, National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was ostensibly conceived to mop unemployment. Suffice to state that the reduction in employment opportunities and rationalisation in both the public and private sectors formed the basis on which the Nigerian unemployment situation was viewed as a danger for the socio-economic stability of the nation. It is on record that “hundreds of thousands of youths have benefited from the NDE scheme through its four-pronged approach that include Vocational Acquisition Training (673,000), Entrepreneurial (Business) training (373,366), Training for Rural Employment and Training for Labour-Based works programme” (Arogundade, Adebisi & Ogunro, 2011, p.45). Continuing, Arogundade et al (2011) pointed out that, “In 2000 alone, NDE reported that 21,708 youths received training in vocational skills in 36 states of the federation and

Abuja, while 5,075 graduated in different trades. The scheme which has a special arrangement for women, said that several of them had been trained; on how to process, preserve and package food" (p.45).

With a take-off grant of N6 billion approved for it in 2001, NAPEP was able to establish structures at all levels nationwide. According to Arogundade, Adebisi and Ogunro (2011, p.45), "under its Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP), it trained 100,000 unemployed youths just as 5,000 others who received training as tailors and fashion designers, were resettled. A total of 50,000 unemployed graduates have also benefited from NAPEP's Mandatory Attachment Programme." These demonstrable instances have the capacity to minimise social vices that could be triggered by idleness.

Shortcomings of Poverty Reduction Programmes

At the forefront of factors militating against the effectiveness of poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria is lack of continuity. A cursory look at their life-span shows that most of the programmes short-lived and incessantly changed only in name with the coming on board of every new administration. 1972 Gen. Yakubu Gowon's regime introduced National Accelerated Food Production Programme and the Nigerian Agricultural and Co-operative Bank, entirely devoted to funding agriculture. This was substituted with the much publicised Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) introduced in 1976 during Olusegun Obasanjo's regime. When Shehu Shagari came on board, he introduced Green Revolution. In 1986, Gen. Babangida established the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) for rural development. DFRRI was run side by side with Better Life for Rural Women heralded by Mrs. Mariam Babangida. Following Gen. Sani Abacha's military take-over, his wife, Mrs. Mariam Sani Abacha launched Family Support Programme (FSP) in 1993. Bringing this scenario to perspective, Orji (2005) posited that when General Abacha took power from Shonekan led interim government in 1993; he introduced other poverty alleviating measures like Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP). However, upon coming to power in the new democratic order in 1999, the Obasanjo administration in an effort to alleviate the suffering and poverty in the land, introduced

the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). In the same president Obasanjo-led government again introduced National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) in 2007 while Subsidy Removal Re-investment Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) was introduced at the instance of Goodluck Jonathan's administration.

Corruption is another factor that cannot be ignored. Government officials who drive the programmes misappropriate funds. Commenting on programmes associated with payment of stipends, Anakpej (2001) cited in Abimiku (2006) observed that the stipends for the NDE are often hijacked by privileged members of the Nigerian society. In some cases, beneficiaries of the programme did not properly manage the funds given them. Many of them, who did not utilise the skills acquired and others did not properly invest the loans they received, thus, found themselves in a worse state. Arogundade, Adebisi and Ogunro (2011) pointed out that, while the directorate (NDE) disclosed that "it disbursed N526, 901,313.11 since inception, for its various programmes, only 24.4% of this total or N129, 048,757.63 was recovered from beneficiaries" (p.45).

There is the problem of benefit capture syndrome (Ekong, 1997; Adawo, 1999 cited in Adawo 2010), where intended benefits are captured by politicians and rent-seeking bureaucrats. Substantiating this claim, Orji (2005) argued that however, well intentioned, these programmes were hijacked by the politicians as the philosophy behind the setting up of these programmes was politicized. This undermined the objective of setting up these programmes as beneficiaries of these programmes are usually party faithful, loyalists and family members instead of genuine members of the society, i.e., the needy.

Inadequate infrastructure is another factor. For any programme to succeed, requisite infrastructure has to be in place. Lack of infrastructure has always been a problem in Nigeria. Inclined by this, Ovie and Akpomuvie (2011) averred that the ever increasing number of the poor in Nigeria and the low levels of infrastructural and human development in the rural areas attest to the ineffectiveness of these poverty alleviation programmes.

Fundamentally, some of the poverty reduction policies do not target the right beneficiaries. Ovie and Akpomuvie (2011) argued in this direction that a situation where the policymakers do not know the people they make the policy for, especially their felt needs, they

are wont to either overestimate or underestimate the problems of such people and are also likely to misplace priorities. Ali-Akpajiak and Pyke (2003, p.71) are apt about this when they observed that poverty alleviation programmes “between 1986 and 1993 were not of benefit to the poor because in addition to the fact that these programmes were not synchronized with community needs, they were characterized by absence of policy framework and undue political interference.” Elaborating on this, CBN (2002) cited in Adawo (2010) maintained that budgetary allocation to the core poverty eradication ministries and agencies totaled N132.47 billion, was pooled into the Poverty Eradication Fund. Continuing, CBN (2002) cited in Adawo (2010) elucidated that a total of 2,497 three-wheeler *paggio* cars called KEKE NAPEP, were sold to beneficiaries at subsidized rates in all states of the Federation. This singular act of distributing tricycles raises fundamental issues as to how government knew that the tricycles would alleviate poverty as well as whether the tricycles were meant to evacuate farm inputs and outputs.

By implication, most public policies on poverty alleviation programmes are at variance with the people's perception of what constitutes their development. It is obvious from the above assertion, that the poor do not share government's enthusiasm for poverty alleviation. Economic policy that favours the rich at the expense of the majority poor also contributes in no small measure to undermine the effectiveness of poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria. On the basis of this, Anyanwu and Nsoro (2002) cited in Abimiku (2006) said that policies like privatization and commercialization have not only led to greater inequality but denied majority of Nigerians access to basic necessities of life such as health, potable water and sanitation thereby making them poorer. This is because rural areas have been neglected and marginalized for decades through economic policies which have continued to favour the urban elites. In theory, emphasis is laid on rural people. But as Abimiku (2006) observed, in practice the rural poor are underfunded and less is done to build and develop rural infrastructure.

Palliative Measures

Nelson Mandela reminded us that, “Poverty is not natural—it is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings” (cited in Mefalopulos, 2008, p.228). In

view of this, the following suggestions may go a long way in alleviating poverty in Nigeria if stakeholders are religiously guided by them.

Government should desist from the practice whereby programmes that were ostensibly designed to reduce poverty for the very poor had little impact on poverty and have worsened inequality either due to negligence or lack of continuity by successive administrations.

Elimination of misdirected subsidies and ensuring that people who should benefit from such subsidies truly benefit can translate to meeting targets of poverty reduction programme by reducing poverty. It is not surprising that some of the banks involved in the programme are not even located in poor and rural communities where the majority of the group lives. So, the true remedy of poverty in Nigeria should go beyond mobilisation to more importantly benefitting those entrapped by certain factors, which confine them to areas of inadequate opportunity and frustration to be adequately empowered financially.

Qualitative infrastructure including sustainable power supply should be put in place to halt rural-urban drift which aggravates high population concentration in cities with its own attendant problems. This is necessary because rural areas are getting poorer and tend to suffer from missing social and infrastructural facilities, markets, limited information, and social stratification.

Adopters of the mass media should recognise that regardless of media reach or penetration, there is always disconnect of the rural people when it comes to social mobilisation. While some people lack access, others do not understand media contents properly. Consequently, media messages couched in vernacular for such audience has the potentials of greater impact. In addition, other forms of communication, specifically interpersonal communication can also prove useful.

Holistically, is the need to better appreciate poverty and adopt a long-term process of how poverty can be genuinely alleviated. This will enable government to adopt an inclusive process with women and minorities, and to utilize local expertise and to have a better coordination within governments. Others are training and education of the public (within and outside formal educational establishments) in poverty issues, and to make sure the strategies are

[well] funded and judiciously utilised (UNDP, 2001). Once this is done, a monitoring and evaluation mechanism should be evolved to ensure productive use of subsidies.

Summary and Conclusion

The dwell on why successive poverty alleviation programmes fail despite social mobilisation about poverty reduction programmes. It emphasises that in event government comes up with a programme, the mass media are always deployed to sell the programme to citizens. Despite extensive use of mass media, almost all previous programmes on poverty reduction fail to deliver on their promises. This is evident in the unbalanced few successes and numerous reasons responsible for failure of programmes as demonstrated in the literature. It, therefore, indicts government as the principal culprit. This is premised on the fact that apart from media hype about programmes, substantive practical steps are not taken to ensure quality assurance of the programmes. The study concludes that government should be more pragmatic in its effort to implement both existing and prospective programmes aimed at ameliorating poverty in Nige

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