

## **Sectoral Approach to Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria 1980-2010: A Survey**

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### **Abstract**

Poverty is a global phenomenon. United Nation's declaration of 1966 as the International Year for the eradication of Poverty was a clarion call on the international development community to focus on poverty eradication. A survey by the Federal Office of Statistics in 1996 put 65.5% of Nigerians as living in poverty. Though this reduced to 54% in 2004, it remained an unacceptably high percentage. This paper attempted a historical survey of Federal Government efforts at eradicating poverty since 1980 up to 2010 through sectoral programmes such as agriculture, health, transport, housing and finance with a view to identifying suitable poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria. Available secondary and internet sources were synthesised with oral interviews to examine how successful these programmes had been and how they could be effectively sustained but it discovered that for various reasons, many of the programmes failed to achieve much despite massive investments. Hence, poverty remained endemic. The paper concluded that until there is genuine government commitment to addressing the root causes of poverty and adhering strictly to the

execution of programmes designed with the collaboration of all the relevant stakeholders, government efforts may remain futile.

### **Introduction**

Poverty has been defined as a state of being poor and lacking resources for sustenance. It is multi-dimensional situation manifested in economic, social and political aspects of life, (Ayodeji, 2015:200). Poverty is viewed by some as a subjective and comparative phenomenon, while others see it as moral and evaluative; and for some poverty is scientifically established, (Wikipedia, 2015). The United Nations Development Programme, (UNDP, 1994) and the World Bank, (1994) reported that more than one billion people or one-fifth of the world's population lived in extreme poverty and that such poverty was a leading cause of mortality. Furthermore, the same World Bank report (1995) referred to poverty as an economic situation where a household income is insufficient to meet the minimum nutritional need for growth and long-term survival. It is a vicious circle of multiple adverse circumstances that limit the choices of the poor. People in this category hardly experience any improvement from years to years or sometimes from one generation to another.

In recognition of the global magnitude of poverty, the United Nations, (1990) declared 1996 as the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty. This renewed the attention of the international (development) community to emphasise poverty reduction policies and programmes that would improve incomes and standard of living of the poor. World Bank records (1995) enabled the Nigerian government recognize the prevalence of poverty among its people, especially in the rural areas with the latter accounting for 6.4 million out of the 10 million extremely poor Nigerians. Hence, successive Nigerian governments since 1960 have attempted to alleviate poverty among Nigerians through sectoral programmes. To this end, the Nigerian government made poverty alleviation one of its objectives in the 1996 budget by introducing some sectoral programmes which included agriculture, health, transport, housing and finance, (Egware, 1997:497). However, most of these (government) policies have failed to achieve their objectives as millions of Nigerians remained poor. In order to achieve its objectives, the government subsequently introduced some multi-sectoral programmes in 1997 which included Community Action Programme for Poverty Alleviation (CAPPA) and the Family

Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) among others. To meet its commitment to these programmes, the Nigerian government earmarked the sum of 4 Billion Naira in the 1997 budget, (Ekong, 1997: 556). However, this paper attempted a historical survey of past sectoral poverty alleviation measures with a view to highlighting policy errors that bedeviled their successful implementation. This paper is discussed in four sections. The first section is the introduction, section two looks reviews poverty in Nigeria and the causes. Section three examines the various sectoral programmes that have been introduced to alleviate poverty since the 1980s till 2010, while the last section looks at the impact of such programmes on Nigeria's poverty level, ending with a conclusion.

### Historical Overview of Poverty in Nigeria

In pre-colonial Nigeria, though people exchanged what they produced for what they needed through trade by barter, the ability to meet their needs was limited to the quantity of their production. During the colonial era, there was self-sufficiency in food but per capital income and social services were low. The oil boom of between 1973 and 1980 brought mixed blessings to Nigeria. The increased revenue was diverted to develop infrastructures, social services and increased wages especially in non-agricultural sectors, (Olaleye, 2000:689).

According to World Bank reports, (1995) the subsequent rise in per capital income had serious adverse consequences on the agricultural sector leading to a drastic fall (from 60% in 1960 to 31% in the early 1980s) in the contribution of agriculture to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Consequently, Nigeria became a net importer of food. Hence, when oil prices began to fall in 1982, the welfare system was affected, per capital income and private consumption dropped. That marked the beginning of real poverty in Nigeria.

The same World Bank reports, (1995) noted that poverty in Nigeria was visibly endemic and found to be more prevalent in the rural areas. The problem in the rural areas was further compounded over the years by the biased development pattern towards the urban areas. This worsened the terms of domestic trade for poor farmers, processors, informal traders and micro-entrepreneurs. The report had disclosed that regional differences in the distribution of poverty had persisted. For instance, poverty was found to have declined

more in the South and Middle Belt. In the South, it declined from 42 to 26 percent while in the North it declined from 36 to 32 per cent. In addition, poverty was also found to be more common among the illiterates, households headed by older people, wages earners, the self-employed and those in communities with poor access to social services.

Poverty as a long-standing problem in Nigeria has manifested itself in the low social status and poor living conditions of the people. Statistical data from the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS, 2000:171), indicated that by 1960 poverty covered about 15% of the population of Nigeria and by 1980, it grew to 28%. By 1985, the extent of poverty was about 46% and then dropped to 43% by 1992. By 1996, poverty incidence in Nigeria was estimated to be about 66% in a total population of about 110 million. Based on the (FOS, 2000:171) data also, the state by state poverty indicated high and varying poverty levels among the states of the federation. See table 1 below. It further showed that poverty in Nigeria increased sharply both between 1980 and 1985 and between 1992 and 1996. Furthermore, by 1992 only 10 states had more than half of their population in poverty, but by 1996 all states except Bayelsa had more than half of their population in poverty. What could have accounted for the fluctuations in the level of poverty?

A combination of factors was responsible for the fluctuations. Inconsistent government policies, bureaucratic bottlenecks as well as inadequate awareness of all stakeholders, among others, were to blame, (Mundi, 2000:72).

**Table 1: Poverty Incidence by State including the F.C.T. (1990-1999)**

| State       | 1980 | 1985 | 1992 | 1996 |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|
| Abia        | 14.4 | 33.1 | 49.9 | 56.2 |
| Adamawa     | 33.4 | 47.2 | 44.1 | 65.5 |
| Akwalbom    | 10.2 | 41.9 | 45.5 | 66.9 |
| Anambra     | 12.8 | 37.7 | 32.3 | 51.0 |
| Bauchi      | 46.0 | 68.9 | 68.8 | 83.5 |
| Bayelsa     | 7.2  | 44.4 | 43.4 | 44.3 |
| Benue       | 23.6 | 42.9 | 40.8 | 64.2 |
| Borno       | 26.4 | 50.1 | 49.7 | 66.9 |
| Cross River | 10.2 | 41.9 | 45.5 | 66.9 |
| Delta       | 19.8 | 52.4 | 33.9 | 56.1 |

|             |      |      |      |      |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|
| Ebonyi      | 12.8 | 37.7 | 32.3 | 51.0 |
| Edo         | 19.8 | 52.4 | 33.9 | 56.1 |
| Ekiti       | 24.9 | 47.3 | 46.6 | 71.6 |
| Enugu       | 12.8 | 37.7 | 32.3 | 51.0 |
| Gombe       | 46.0 | 86.9 | 68.8 | 83.5 |
| Imo         | 14.4 | 33.1 | 49.9 | 56.2 |
| Jigawa      | 37.5 | 54.0 | 38.7 | 71.0 |
| Kaduna      | 44.7 | 58.5 | 32.0 | 67.7 |
| Kano        | 37.5 | 55.0 | 38.7 | 71.0 |
| Kastina     | 44.7 | 58.7 | 32.0 | 67.7 |
| Kebbi       | 25.4 | 45.8 | 37.9 | 83.6 |
| Kogi        | 33.3 | 39.3 | 60.8 | 75.5 |
| Kwara       | 33.3 | 39.3 | 60.8 | 75.5 |
| Lagos       | 26.4 | 42.6 | 48.1 | 83.0 |
| Nassarawa   | 49.5 | 49.5 | 50.2 | 62.7 |
| Niger       | 34.0 | 61.4 | 29.9 | 52.9 |
| Ogun        | 20.0 | 56.0 | 36.3 | 69.9 |
| Ondo        | 24.9 | 47.3 | 46.6 | 71.6 |
| Osun        | 7.8  | 28.3 | 40.7 | 58.7 |
| Oyo         | 7.8  | 28.3 | 40.7 | 58.7 |
| Plateau     | 49.5 | 64.2 | 50.2 | 62.7 |
| Rivers      | 7.2  | 44.4 | 43.4 | 77.3 |
| Sokoto      | 25.4 | 45.8 | 37.9 | 83.6 |
| Taraba      | 33.4 | 47.2 | 44.1 | 65.5 |
| Yobe        | 26.4 | 50.1 | 49.7 | 66.9 |
| Zamfara     | 33.4 | 45.8 | 37.9 | 83.6 |
| EC.r.       | n.a  | n.a  | 27.6 | 53.0 |
| All Nigeria | 28.1 | 46.3 | 42.7 | 65.6 |

Source: Federal Office of Statistics (FOS), 2000

n.a. = not available

### Causes of Poverty in Nigeria

The Federal Office of Statistics (2000:171) identified the basic causes of poverty as including inadequate access to education, health, sanitation and water; low level technology, inefficient use of resources, bad governance, unemployment and poor human resources development among others.

### Poverty Alleviation Programmes

The complexity of the manifestation of poverty in the lives of Nigerians has been engendered through efforts aimed at tackling poverty through sectorial and multi-sectorial approaches. Sectorial approaches include agriculture, health, education, transport, housing and the financial sectors, while the multi-sectorial approach includes the National Directorate of Employment (NDE); Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRR1); Better Life for Rural Women; Family Support Programme (FSP) among others, (Ebvumwan, 1999:538). As earlier stated, this paper focused on some sectorial approaches to poverty alleviation.

#### (a) Agriculture

During the mid-1950s and early 1960s, rural development was viewed as agricultural development. Consequently, rural development worldwide was intensified to eradicate poverty, raise the standard of living of rural dwellers and develop agricultural productivity, (Ebvumwan, 1999:538). Efforts at poverty alleviation by the Nigerian government can be traced to 1960. The government established in the Western Region the Farm Settlement Scheme in the region in 1960, and was replicated in the Eastern Region in 1962, in the Northern Region in 1963 and in the Mid-Western Region in 1964. The scheme was targeted at solving the unemployment problem of school leavers. However, lack of equipment, qualified personal and the general lack of interest by the target group rendered the attempt unsuccessful, (Ekong, 1991:17).

As far back as 1971, the Nigerian government had identified poverty as a hindrance to rural development. Hence, in line with World Bank recommendation, which was based on the agricultural survey of Nigeria, the federal government embarked on implementing three pilot integrated agricultural and rural development projects in Funtua, Gusau and Gombe. The Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) later spread to all states of the federation. These projects were aimed at stimulating increased food production and enhancing the income of the rural population Ekong, (1991:17).

Between 1970 and 1982, the contribution of agriculture to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) fell from 45 per cent to 27 per cent, agricultural contribution to exports nose-dived from 70% to 20%

during the same period. Importation of goods consequently increased substantially in the same period. Therefore, in the mid to late 1970s, strategies such as Operation Feed the Nation and Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme Fund were adopted. All these attempts failed to meet the food need of the nation or uplift the poor, (Egware, 1997:495). During the civilian administration of President Shehu Shagari, the Green Revolution was adopted with the aim of improving farm produce and rural living standard. It was aimed at creating enabling environment in the rural areas to discourage farm labour from migrating to urban centres. However, political instability, inconsistencies in government policies and other exigencies led to the failure of the projects. Instead there was increase in the number of the rural poor, decrease in food production and increase in rural-urban drift. It was subsequently scrapped, (Odedeji, 1997:373).

To raise agricultural productivity as well as the living standards of the rural areas, the River Development Projects were adopted around the 80s. This also met with failure, which made the government to excise some of its departments and what was left was discredited in the mid-80s. Other agricultural strategies include the establishment of National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) in 1991, the Strategic Grains Reserves Programme, the development of fishery, small ruminant production and pasture grazing reserve, (Archibong, 1997:461-462). Central Bank of Nigeria's reports (1995) showed that NALDA's operation in 30 states of the federation encouraged small holder farmers to bring more land under cultivation thus, improving agricultural output and consequently reducing household expenditure on food, which led to poverty alleviation. The same CBN reports recorded that the performance of NALDA was constrained by inadequate and untimely release of funds and shortage of farm machinery.

#### **(b) The Financial Sector**

Government efforts at alleviating poverty through the financial sector included the establishment of development banks: the Agricultural Credit Guarantees Scheme (ACGS), the Central Bank of Nigeria rural banking programme which was replaced by Community Banks and the People's Bank of Nigeria with operations similar to non-formal banking. The Rural Banking Scheme was introduced in 1977. It was aimed at bringing banking services to the rural areas. Unfortunately,

limited success was recorded because the banks were reluctant to open rural branches for many reasons. The most important of the reasons was the lack of basic infrastructures in the rural areas. To support the above sectorial and multi-sectorial government efforts, a relief package was also provided to alleviate poverty caused by the effects of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). In June 1989, the Federal Government gave an extra-budgetary relief package amounting to N494.9 million to provide employment opportunities, improve health care delivery and reduce transport difficulties, (Uniamikigbo, 1997:30).

Similarly, in 1989, the People's Bank of Nigeria was established to meet the needs of the poor small-scale business entrepreneurs. This was an informal bank designed to lend money to the poor without collateral. It depended solely on the Federal government grants. It extended credit to the poor who could not otherwise have access to credit facilities in the commercial and merchant banks. In like manner, the Community Bank was established in 1990. Owned and managed by communities it was intended to provide financial services to members on easy terms such as self-recognition and credit-worthiness. Skepticism was however expressed about appropriate funding and management. The Nigerian Bank for Commerce and Industry was established in 1993. This was designed to provide loans for small and medium-scale enterprises but the bank could not achieve much party because it resorted to conventional banking requirements for granting loans, (Ekong, 1997:558).

#### **(c) The Health Sector**

Quoting UNICEF, (Uniamikigbo, 1997:30) noted that the main goal of Nigeria's health policy was the provision of affordable health service to large proportion of Nigerians. This included health education, adequate nutrition, safe drinking water, sanitation, maternal and child health with referral to other levels of health care. Some of the health schemes included the Primary Health Care Scheme which was aimed at providing at least one health centre in every local government area. Still referring to the UNICEF, (Uniamikigbo, 1997:30) noted another health intervention as the UNICEF assisted Guineaworm Eradication Programme launched in 1988. It recorded great success. Though the effectiveness of public health care programmes was hindered by inadequate funding from local governments and lack of equipment, essential drugs and trained manpower, the number of reported cases

reduced from 650, 000 in 1988 to 222,000 by the end of 1992. The Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) established in 1992 was to cater for the health need of the rural people.

#### (d) Education Sector

Egware, (1997:496) noted that since 1971, the major focus of the National Policy on Education had remained making education meet the economic need and development of every Nigerian. Though the Federal Government had spent huge sums of money on education, much of it had been spent on secondary and tertiary education whereas it is the primary and adult education that the poor need most. The Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme started during Third National Development Plan (1975-1980) was abandoned at the national level. Most states either continued or abandoned the plan too. This (together with inadequate funding) invariably led to the rapid fall in the standard of education.

Some programmes specifically targeted at the poor included, the nomadic education developed to train the children of nomads, especially in the north. Other programmes were focused on girls' education, adult literacy, women and children in exceptionally deficient circumstances. Despite efforts made toward making education come within the reach of all Nigerians, only adult literacy rate, which stood at 49.8 in 1980 increased marginally to 55.0 in 1995, (Olaleye, 2000:691).

#### (e) The Housing Sector

The National Housing Policy was launched in February 1991 by the Federal Government through the establishment of National Housing Fund managed by the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria. To moderate the acute shortage of shelter, the government also designed a programme for direct construction of house. The government constructed some prototype bungalows ranging from one to three bedroom sizes which were presumably sold to the low income earners. It launched the National Housing Construction for 1994/95 which was expected to build 121,000 housing units. In addition, "the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) was involved in direct construction of housing units. In Abuja, the FHA completed 1,114 housing units in the Federal Capital Territory in 1994 alone, (Uniamikigbo, 1997: 30). These efforts have however not drastically reduced the housing

problems faced by the poor because they could not afford the rents or outright purchase of the houses, (Ekong, 1997:558). Apart from the above sectorial programmes, several multi-sectorial programmes were also embarked upon to alleviate poverty in Nigeria including some that were women-friendly.

#### Why the Programmes Failed

It has been observed that many of the poverty alleviation programmes failed for several reasons and have not impacted positively on Nigeria's poverty level. One of such is the use of wrong approaches. Those who designed the programmes did not involve the poor who are the prospective beneficiaries. It is believed that the target group should have been involved during the planning and designing stages. That is, a 'bottom-top' rather than 'top-bottom' approach should have been used to determine the needs of the poor, (Ekong, 1997:560).

The reasons for failure have been broadly categorised into two, designing and implementation, policy acceptability which are tagged as 'aspirin solution' and 'benefit capture'. The 'aspirin solution' refers to a situation where instant solutions are prescribed to treat the perceived symptoms of a problem without considering the root cause(s) of the problem. For instance, a health centre may be recommended for a community with a high incidence of illness that only need good drinking water to stay healthy. The 'benefit capture' depicts a scenario where benefits that should accrue to the beneficiary of designed projects are 'captured' away at every stage of the project development, (Egware, 1997:498).

Other reasons for the failure of poverty alleviation programmes include their ad-hoc nature, poor design and execution. Inadequate staffing and equipment also contribute to the failure of poverty alleviation programmes. In addition, it has been noted that the scope of the activities of most agencies set up for PAP is too broad. Consequently, the available resources are thinly spread into too many activities. An example is the case of DFRRI and Better Life for Rural Women whose programmes covered almost every sector and overlapped with many other existing programmes, (Egware, 1997:498).

Wrong location of poverty alleviation projects also lead to failure in achieving the set objectives. Designers and planners often make the mistake of sitting projects in places of their own choice without recourse to their appropriateness in view of the population

which may be served by such projects. These choices were often informed by personal interests in terms of religions, politics, ethnicity or social inclination. The use of oversophisticated equipment is another cause of failure. In an attempt to impress certain individuals, some government/donors often provide sophisticated equipment to communities instead of simple but equally effective and efficient machine. When this equipment got damaged, the programmes too collapsed because there were no spare parts or the technical know-how to operate and maintain them. Besides, the running cost of such equipment may be beyond the reach of the beneficiaries of the project. It is therefore important to put into consideration the maintenance and operation of equipment as constant breakdown of equipment often discourage young entrepreneurs, (Olobatoke, 2005, oral interview). The absence of effective collaboration among the three tiers of governments, duplication of functions and unhealthy rivalries also contributed to the failure of the programmes, (Aliyu, 2002:13).

### **Sustaining the Programmes Beyond 2010**

Continuity of these laudable poverty alleviation programmes must be ensured. Funding and all necessary logistics must be provided as and when due. Proper monitoring of the programmes and continued collaboration between the three tiers of government must also be ensured. The blueprint for these programmes must be followed progressively to the letter.

The legal instrument instituting these poverty alleviation programmes should be entrenched in the constitution to ensure compliance by the relevant authorities. Adequate supply of fertilizers and other farming inputs, timely supply and distribution of these inputs during planting season should be ensured. Standard and functional education must be made available to all Nigerians. Access to portable water must be ensured in order to reduce water borne diseases and to provide optimum use of time especially by rural dwellers that trek miles to fetch water.

Agriculture, a potential source of food and employment has a vital role to play in solving poverty problems. Therefore, all hands must be on deck to solve all agricultural problems of Nigerians in order to reduce the poverty and unemployment levels. One of such problems is the lack of adequate facilities for on-farm and off-farm storage,

irrigation and health-care in the rural areas. Consequently, these facilities should be provided where needed.

There is need for a national legislation for rural development and for decentralized mechanisms of co-ordination in order to facilitate the effective control of rural development programmes. This legislation should provide for the required involvement of the communities in the process of coordination. A number of general development policy redirection are required to reverse the negative cycle of growing rural poverty in deficient food production systems and lack of food security and resource degradation. Great priority must be given to improving the rural economic base, through the improvement of agricultural productivity and equity considerations have to be inter-linked by a strategy of increasing production through the poor and for the poor.

The land tenure system should be reformed by giving local users more control of their resources so as to induce investment for sustained agricultural production and care for the production of national resources. Women have to be fully, involved in an empowerment and self-responsibility of rural people. Educational training and equal access to all services and resources (extension credits) are crucial prerequisites for equal involvement of women in the process of rural development. Planning of support measures should be based on a gender-specific target group analysis.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has shown that poverty, be it relative or absolute is a universal phenomenon. The various ways it manifested the factors that resulted in poverty and the consequences were examined. Furthermore, governmental multi-sectoral programmes mounted to alleviate poverty in Nigeria since 1980 up to 2010 were discussed and appraised. Though various empirical studies have revealed that poverty is a global phenomenon, this paper submitted that all the factors that militated against the success of poverty alleviation programmes in the past could be avoided. It suggested that focus should be on the educational and economic empowerments of women and youths, while agriculture could be promoted to make Nigeria self-sufficient in food production. Furthermore, it is hoped that an apolitical approach would be adopted so as to get the best services from competent technical/professional people in the various sectors. It concluded that only through consistent

collaboration between all tiers of government, N.G.Os and the beneficiaries in the planning and execution of poverty alleviation projects could there be any appreciable reduction in the persistently high level of poverty in Nigeria.

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