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COUNSELING TO GOVERNMENT FOR PROPER IMPLEMENTATION OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA

OBUTE, MAXIMUS CHIJIOKE (M.Ed)
PEACELAND COLLEGE OF EDUCATION,
ENUGU, ENUGU STATE

&

ASOGWA KELVIN A. (M.Ed)
PEACELAND COLLEGE OF EDUCATION,
ENUGU, ENUGU STATE

&

ERUKA ANTHONY C. (M.Ed)
+2348083703900

Abstract

Many democratic dispensations and military regimes in Nigeria have employed many means to reduce poverty at all levels. These schemes are known as poverty alleviation or poverty reduction programmes. It is believed that the Nigerian government had good intentions for the citizenry in the initiation and execution of these strategies meant to reduce or alleviate material deprivations. The findings of this paper revealed that these programmes include better life for rural women, Sure-P, N – power, agricultural grants and loans through world Bank assisted programmes et cetera. Again, the efforts to reduce poverty in Nigeria, is not an exclusivity of government as non-governmental organizations and Faith based bodies also contribute their own quota to its sustainability and success. However, the study discovered that the efforts within the governments' circles suffer setbacks due to corrupt practices of some officials, political instability that births discontinuities of the programmes, among others. In order to make room for the proper implementation of poverty alleviation programmes in the country, this work presents some recommendations which include: that government at all levels and organizations involved should effectively monitor or supervise the proper distribution of materials provided to reach the poor groups in the society. Provision of basic education should be for all without ethnic bias. There should be equal health care services extended to the grass roots through proper functioning of primary health care. Finally, all Nigerians should collaborate with government to guarantee that poverty is alleviated as intended through these programmes.

Keywords: Counseling, poverty, poverty alleviation programmes, Proper implementation, Nigeria.

Introduction

Over the years, the world at large government's organizations, groups and individuals facing serious challenges of poverty at different levels; be it at the federal, the state and the local

levels of government. It is pertinent to note that high poverty status is endemic also exit in Nigeria as a country.

However, every government in Nigeria since the independence has recommended one or two strategies to cubing or alleviating poverty within their society but today, poverty is still on the high side level at the various levels of government in Nigeria. On that note this paper has the following points to examine;

1. The concept of poverty and its causes
2. The concept of poverty alleviation in Nigeria
3. Programmes put in place by different governments to reduce poverty in our land
4. Reasons why those programmes have failed
5. Recommended best counseling strategies for proper implementation of these poverty alleviation programme in Nigeria.

The united nations (2004) defined poverty as a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural organization (UNESCO) on the other hand, noted that poverty could be defined in either relation or absolute terms. absolute poverty, it notes, "measurement poverty in relation to the amount of money necessary to meet basic needs such as food, clothing , and shelter" of individuals. In relative terms, "people are poor if they fall below prevailing standard of living in a given society context" (Mohammed, 2018). Poverty refers to "shortage of food, lack of shelter, being ill, and not being able to go to school, not being able to read, fear for the future, not having a job, not being able to speak correctly, losing a child due to illness brought about by dirty water, lack of representation, powerlessness, not being able to speak correctly and inadequate freedom", (World bank 1999). In 2011, World Bank also defines poverty as "distinct deprivation in the living condition which comprises multiple dimensions; these include inability to have access to basic needs ……" (Musa et al 2016)

According to Vjas and Bhargava (1995) poverty is seen in the financial institution as living on less than $1.90 a day.

Obiwum (2019), summarized the conditions of being poor in Nigeria context in the following ways:

i. Households or individual below the poverty line and whole incomes are insufficient to provide for their basic needs
ii. Households or individual lack access to basic services , political contracts and other forms of support
iii. People who are in isolated rural areas lack essential infrastructures
iv. Female-headed households whose nutritional needs are not being met adequately
v. Persons who have lost their jobs and are unable to find employment as a result of economic reforms etc.
vi.

According to Taiwo and Agwu (2016) ethnic minorities are marginalized, deprieved and persecuted economically, socially, culturally and politically, hence we can concluded that

poverty is the inability for an individual or a household to provide for his/ her basic needs in life.

Causes of Poverty

It has been noticed that the causes of poverty in developing countries of the world are numerous. In Africa it is rampart than in other continent in the entire world.

Enahoro and Ikpefan (2005) identify causes of poverty as large family size, low level of human capital, lack of access to cultivable land, poor health status of an individual and culture and social values which have unfavourable bearing on work ethic, drug and alcohol abuse and certain types of family structure (polygamy, single parent households).

Ukwu (2002), indentified the causes of poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa to include:

- Inadequate physical assets, such as land and capital and minimal access by the poor to credit even once small scale.
- Inadequate access to means of supporting rural development in poor regions. Inadequate access to markets where the poor can sell goods and services
- Low endowment of human capital
- Distinction of natural resources, leading to environmental degradation and reduced productivity
- Inadequate access to assistance for those victimized by transitory poverty.
- Lack of participation in poverty alleviation programs

Poverty can also be as an outcome of the problem of urbanization. As observed by Ijaiya (2000). The factors that cause poverty in most urban cities can be linked to the inner urban decay caused by poor public facilities that have been allowed to get run down due to lack of maintenance and investment. Insufficient resources and poor maintenance skills are often accountable for this in addition; the available amenities are frequently inadequate to meet the increasing demands placed on them. The local authorities have over the years cut expenditures on infrastructures development and raised tax rates. These policies of local authorities are counter-productive and constrain private firms to relocate to more favourable areas, thus reducing employment. Consequently the burden of taxes falls disproportionately on the residents of the community who are less likely to move.

Concept of poverty alleviation

Poverty alleviation is meant to better the life of those peoples currently living in poverty. According to Wikipedia, poverty alleviation is a set of measure both economic and humanitarian, that are intended to permanently lift people out of poverty.

Obiwuru (2019) defined poverty alleviation as something that is geared generally towards saving humanity from reproachful poverty mainly through empowerment and educations, thereby enabling people to cater for their own personal and family basic needs.

The major aim of poverty alleviation programmes is at " promoting economic growth that will permanently lift as many people as possible over a poverty line" (barder, 2009). It concerns itself with the technical lifting of "people out of poverty". However, it has "no role

in regard to voluntary poverty", which arises from peoples, religious and philosophical beliefs (Vyas & Bhargawa, 1995).

Poverty alleviation programmes can only be achieved internally and locally by or through individuals, governments and non-governmental organization with sincere efforts to end poverty of all kinds in any particular country or at the world at large.

Programmes put in place by different governments to reduce poverty in Nigeria

Over the years, different governments in Nigeria have tried their best in reducing poverty at all levels. Different financial institutions, non-governmental organizations and the Nigeria government in particular have embarked on series of poverty alleviation programmes that would see Nigerians being emancipated from the bondage of poverty through. To borrow the words of Musa et al, (2016), " Capacity building", "employment generation to the less privileges and tertiary institutions graduates", "skills acquisition", "generation of income to boost agricultural output" among others. It should be noted that the desire to mitigate poverty in the country is not of recent development. Evidence of these kinds can be seen in the 1960's poverty alleviation programme called farm settlement option, which was aimed at agricultural improvement for expiration of cash crops.

In 1972 and 1973, after the collapse of the programme, the General Gowon administration later introduced the agricultural development project (ADP) in 1973. This ADP programme was then jointly financed by the World Bank, the federal and state government of Nigeria at then. The programme then was aimed at promoting rural development.

After that, the General Olusegun Obasanjo administration in 1976 introduced the defunct Operation Feed the Nation (OFN). The basic aim of this programme was to raise the awareness of Nigerians towards self sufficiently in food production. All the money spent into (OFN). The basic aim of this programme was to raise the awareness of Nigerians towards self sufficiently in food production. All the money general into OFN programme, the programme did not produce the expected appreciable positive outcome at increasing food production.

However, Obasanjo government promulgated a decree which is a military law to ensure that land tenure system was abolished that all land belongs to the government. The policy was aimed at ensuring that every adult attempts to farm. It was believed that with more food production there would be better standard of living for the citizenry.

In 1979-1983, during President Shehu Shegari, he introduced the "Green Revolution". This programme also aims at reducing poverty in our land. The programme again could not go far as there was no zeal and commitment by the operators of the programme.

General Ibrahim Bagangida in 1986 during his administration introduced "the Structural Adjustment Programme" (SAP). The programme's objective was at making Nigerians self reliance industrially. Though SAP in principle was a good programme, but the then government in power was not committed to its fruitful implementation.

Ibrahim Babanginda also created a programme called the National Directorate of Employment (NDE): The major aim then was to reduce poverty through reduction of unemployment with greater emphasis on self-reliance and entrepreneurship. The programme was very laudable but it was not faithfully implemented.

Another poverty alleviation programme introduced by Babangida's administration was the Directorate of Foods, Road and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI) between 1985-1993. The major concerns of DFRRI was to open-up all rural areas, construct feeder roads and bridges, water supply etc, but the people in charge of the DFRRI programme became corrupt and the programme's aim was lost .

Babanginda further introduced the Peoples Bank Programmes aimed at giving loans to small scale industries. Also is the Better Life Programme for rural women but all also failed due to corrupt officials in charge of the programme.

In 1979, the federal government created the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) which was meant to be giving loans to Nigerians. Again, officials in that piloted the programme deverted the programme into a family project with nepotism, being the order of the day.

President Obasanjo's administration between 1999-2013 set up Nigerian economic policy. The programme was aimed to enabling Nigerians to be better placed towards articulating ways of using its subsequent annual budget to realize the developmental goals stated in their policy statement.

General Obasanjo's administration also put up a number of measures aimed at alleviating the suffering of Nigerians. The policies are:-

- The adoption of measures to stimulate production and broaden the supply base of the Nigeria economy.
- Reformation of the tariff policies on a number of times with the aimed of promoting industrial diversification and economic substance.

President Goodluck Jonathan also introduced the Sure-P programme aimed at reducing unemployment by engaging many of the Nigerian youths into legitimate jobs and also the current administration of

President Muhammed Buhari introduced N-power projects, all aim at reducing poverty in Nigeria but the challenges or problems it faces is the improper management of this government plan. Consequently, major stake holders involved in normal sharing of the employment are deviating and selling the job opportunities which were not the major aim of the administration.

REASONS WHY POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA FAILED.

Government at all levels in Nigeria meant good for every citizenry through poverty alleviation programmes. In spite all the government plans to reduce poverty, Nigerian people plans and Africans at large are also experiencing poverty at a great extent. Obiwum (2019)

listed the following reasons for the acceleration of poverty in Nigeria despite the poverty alleviation programs

- Erratiness of programme
- Corruption and mismanagement
- Hypocrisy on the part of world bank and IMF and finally
- Unnecessary imitations

However, all these are summarized as corrupt practices in the programmes which make the programme non-accessible to the most people that needed it. Other reasons for the failure of Poverty Alleviation Programme in Nigeria according to Hussaini (2014) are; a lack of clearly defined policy framework with proper guidelines for poverty alleviation, political interference policy and macro-economic dislocation and political deception from our different leaders at all levels of government.

Taiwo and Agwu (2016) in their work on problems and prospects of poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria.
These reasons of failed poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria are follow:

- Lack of targeting mechanism for the poor, most of the programmes do not focus directly on the poor.
- Political and policy instability, this has resulted in frequent policy change and inconsistent implementation, which in turn have prevented the continuous progress of the programmes
- Severe budgetary, management and government problems
- Over extended scope of activities of most institutions resulting in resources being spread to thinly on too many activities DFRRI and BLP, for example, covered almost every sector and overlapped with many other existing programmes
- Lack of accountability and transparency
- Headquarters coordination of the various programmes.
- Most of the programmes lacked vision for their sustainability
- Absence of agreed poverty reduction agenda that can be used by all concerned federal government , state government , NGO's and the International Donor community.
- Lack of cooperation among the three tiers of government
- Inappropriate programmes design reflecting lack of involvement of beneficiaries in the formulation and impalementation of programmes
- Capacity underutilization access to large farm lands and fiancé
- Heavy taxation from all tiers of government
- Persistent dependence on imported inputs
- Inadequate infrastructure for movement
- Processing and preservation of agricultural products
- High operating costs arising from the private investments in infrastructural support services such as electricity and water supply

However, as various scholars like Obiwuru (2019), Hussani (2014) and Taiwo and Agwu (2016) summarized the reasons for proper implementation of poverty alleviation in Nigeria as lack of planning and corruption practices of officials at different levels of government. We now deem it fit for the counselor to profer possible solutions in curbing this challenges or problems.

Counseling strategies for proper implementation of poverty alleviation in Nigeria

In recent time, individual at all level has known the important of counselor in all aspect of life endeavour ranging from personnel Counseling, group or organizational counseling, etc. counseling is defined as a therapy in which a person (client) discourse, freely about his/ her problems and share feelings, with the counselor who advises or helps the client in dealing with his or her problems. As scholars citied in this work, identified major means of proper implementation of poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria, it now demands for proper advice on how proper implementation of this could be achieved and through this programme, counseling process is been taken care of.

As the causes of poverty are multidimensional in the same way the strategies for poverty reducation must also be multidimensional. It is an outcome of this that Aliyu (1999), as cited in Aluko (2003) suggested that a very strong and Solid foundation is essential for the successful implementation of poverty reduction programmes in any developing country, the solid base should be in areas of;

- National security and political stability
- Discipline
- Infrastructural development
- Economic stability and provision of adequate welfare services.

World Bank in their report in 1996 suggested two major strategies for proper implementation of poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria, they are;

- Promotion of the productive use of the poor most abundant asset labour. This invariably calls for policies that create market incentive, stable social and political institution, good infrastructure and adaptable technology
- Making basic social services available to the poor. Hence primary health care, family planning, balance nutrition and primary education are of prime importance.

However, it is also advisable that government should adequately monitor any poverty alleviation programme going on in Nigeria from federal across borders if all this is properly done it will be easy for poverty to be reduced at the minimal rate.

Recommendations

The issue of poverty in a developing country like Nigeria cannot go entirely but as a result of poverty alleviation or reduction programmes, some proper measures can see to the minimization. These measures include:

- Proper monitoring of people assigned in carrying out the poverty alleviation programme by the government and other agencies that will see that corruption or diversion of those materials is not permitted.
- There must be improvement in rural development so that people within the rural areas can benefit as they are mostly affected.
- There should be proper distribution of poverty alleviation programmes to various states and local government without the consideration of ethnicity
- Adequate maintenance of price and exchange rate for proper stability in order to create a healthy balance of payment by all individual

- Creation of laws governing fiscal and monitory processes
- Proper restructuring of the economy so as to be more private led and technology driven.
- Human capital investment should be considered paramount
- Sharp practices which leads to corruption should not be tolerated
- Access to health care and education should be granted to all citizenry in Nigeria etc

Conclusion

Poverty alleviation programmes as discussed in this paper have shown us that various administrations since Nigeria independence meant well for all citizenry through poverty reduction programmes set aside but corruption and sharp practices have affected the proper implementations of this programme. It is as a result of this, that this paper advises the government and other agencies concerned to properly monitor officials carrying out these duties to ensure that the benefits reach the poorest rural populace of the poor in our society. By so doing, our social welfare services, manufacturing industries, agricultural sectors and other sectors will easily function well.

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