Available online at www.elixirpublishers.com (Elixir International Journal)

Agriculture

Elixir Agriculture 43 (2012) 6559-6563

ISSN: 2229-712X

Agricultural and rural management projects as vehicle for poverty alleviation: the Nigerian experience

Onyema E. Ofoegbu

Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Social and Management Sciences, Nigeria

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 15 December 2011;

Received in revised form:

19 January 2012;

Accepted: 31 January 2012;

Keywords

Rural management,

Vehicle,

Poverty Indicators.

ABSTRACT

The issue of poverty and strategies to deal with it has occupied the 'minds' of various Governments in Nigeria before and after independence in 1960. Indeed the scourge of poverty has been the bane of the Countries of sub Saharan Africa for decades. Each country has tried to devise strategies and methods of dealing with the problem. Poverty is actually a world wide phenomenon hence; it has always attracted the attention of International Organizations like the United Nations and its subsidiary Organizations like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), and a host of others. The concern over poverty and the need to alleviate it, is predicated on the fact that it is a social phenomenon with multifarious negative consequences on the health of the people, the socio economic dimensions of the country and the totality of the productive capability and capacity of any country.

Introduction

Poverty has been conceived and defined in many different ways and this accounts for the different approaches and strategies to tackle the problem.

Poverty has been referred to as a state of being poor. Poverty has also been viewed not in the context of lack of income, education, health facilities but also in the context of absence of participation, empowerment, good governance and inability to defend oneself from environmental circumstances.

At the conceptual level, poverty can be extreme or absolute. According Mc namara (1978) absolute poverty is a condition of life characterized by malnutrition, illiteracy, disease, squalid surroundings, high infant mortality and low life expectancy. In Nigeria like other developing countries poverty is not restricted to the rural areas, poverty also exists in urban areas. The fact is that urban poverty appears more devastating, more challenging, more complex, psychologically disorientating than the rural poverty because of its nature and circumstances. Urban poverty may denote the poor people who live in squalor in urban cities like Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, Onitsha and a host of others while rural poverty is taken to refer to the condition of the poorest of the poor who inhabit the rural areas of Nigeria.

The negative impact of poverty and its dysfunctional effects on the national economic scheme of things compelled various governments in Nigeria especially since independence to make attempts to tackle the problem. However, whether such attempts have ameliorated or solved the problems remain to been seen.

Literature Review

The complexity of the poverty phenomena has engendered different opinions, different approaches and different solutions.

Daura (2000) has observed that the incidence of poverty in Nigeria is high and on the general increase since 1980. According to him the incidence of poverty rose from 28.1% in 1980 to 46.3% in 1985 and sharply to 65.9% in 1996. The disturbing aspect of Daura's revelation is not in the continuing increase of incidence of poverty but in the lack of visible efforts to tackle the problem seriously.

Sen (1999), has tried to elucidate the poverty situation by identifying five dimensions of poverty which include, political, economic, social, lack of transparency, and lack of perceived security. Sen (1999) conceives poverty in the context of deficit in peoples capabilities and functioning along the above five dimensions. Ostrom (1999) has added psychological dimension to the discussion by arguing that intrinsic economic motivation could be diminished by low levels of self-esteem and self determination leading perhaps, to poverty. The implication of what ostrom is saying is that poverty could be self induced or can be externally induce.

The elites have been implicated in the poverty issue. According Kerr et al (1998) elite capture and social exclusion may prevent the benefits of community driven development programmes from reaching the most vulnerable including the poorest of poor, women and minority groups.

Porter (1995), while supporting the concept of externally induced poverty has contended that poverty could be reduced by externality clustering in communities in poor countries. Wiens and Gudagni (1998) have reported that demand driven investment funds in several Latin American countries did not reach the very poorest. The same experience is being replicated in Nigeria where poverty alleviation programmes with billions of naira have ended up not achieving desired effect because of elite capture. It would appear therefore, that elite capture is being implicated in poverty deterioration and this is tending to become a world wide phenomenon. Figures from the federal office of statistics indicate that about 60% of Nigerian's in year 2000 were poor and lived on less than N100 per day. Obviously the situation is worse today where about 70.1million Nigerians live below poverty line.

Poverty Indicators

Experts are agreed that there is widespread poverty in Nigeria coupled with extreme environmental poor conditions.

Tele:

E-mail addresses: eugeneofoegbu@yahoo.com

Various indices have been used as indicators of poverty.

- Access to basic healthy facilities
- Maternal infant mortality rate
- Adult literacy rate
- Access to portable water
- Income per capita
- Life expectancy

In year 2000 those having access to basic health in Nigeria were 49% of the, population today the percentage is less as poverty level increases. In the same period infant mortality rate was 79, out of 1000 births, the figures are no better today.

Table 1 gives indication that the incidences of poverty are on the increase. In 1980 it was 28.1% but by 2005, it has risen to 70.1%. In 1980 GDP per capita in US dollar was 314 while in 1999 it had come down to 256 US dollar. However, US dollar by year 2000 it has risen to 800 dollars.

To highlight the Nigerian increasing poverty situation, a comparison is made with some other African countries. Information on table 2 shows that for the different years on the table and on each of the variables Nigeria does not fare well when compared with some other African countries. For example, in GDP Nigeria is least along with Zambia. For infant mortality Nigeria's figure is highest while access to safe water Nigeria is also the least.

Most diseases are either water borne or through the air, or by Direct contact. The issue of safe waters is therefore very important. The level and availability of this safe water is also an indicator of level of poverty. Table 3 indicates that as at 2002, 32.22 percent of Nigerians were depending on stream/ponds as their main source of water. The table also shows that only 24.74% of the population have access to pipe borne water. This is certainly a serious poverty situation.

Access to decent toilet facilities is also an indicator of level of poverty. A cursory look at table 4 shows that 56.97% of people in Nigeria are still using pit latrine while those using water closet are only 10.30%. There is no gain saying the fact that the poverty indicator statistics in Nigeria are disturbing.

Causes of Poverty

The rate and level of poverty are sometimes dispersed and varies from one place of the country to the other. However while poverty has been identified to be more serious in some places than the other the causes of poverty may tend to have a common denominator.

One of the fundamental causes of poverty is the inability of resources to match the population growth. When population growth outstrips economic growth, the principle of survival of the fittest appear to set in. It would appear also that nature has also a hand in poverty. Some places in Nigeria have more fertile land, good forest reserve and other life

Supporting sources than the other places with the result that while some people have food stuff in abundance others are merely struggling to survive.

Bad Agricultural Policies

The law of social contract between the Government and the governed imposes on the government a duty to create the enabling environment for economic prosperity and food sufficiency and food security. Empirical evidence indicates that this does not seem to be the case. Agriculture as a percentage of GDP reportedly fell from 60% in the 1960s to 31% in the 1970s and 1980s and the decline is continuing.

Greed and Corruption

The one single factor that has caused extreme poverty in Nigeria is corruption, occasioned by greed, insensitivity and wickedness. Bad leadership and mismanagement have also contributed in no small measure to the incidences of poverty in Nigeria. The three evil factors of corruption, bad leadership and mismanagement of resources are the greatest agents of poverty. A look at table 5 indicates that in all theaters of corruption and mismanagement Nigeria scored first class grade more than other African countries. The most disturbing aspect of the corruption induced poverty is that those who are implicated in it do not seem to bother.

Strategies to Tackle Poverty

Various government administrations in Nigeria, realizing the evil effects and consequences of poverty have initiated at various times strategies to tackle the problem of poverty and poverty related issues.

Some of the strategies include:

- ❖Agricultural Development Programmes
- ❖Infrastructural Development Programmes
- ❖Rural Industrialization Programmes
- ❖Enterprise Development Programmes
- ❖Health and Social Development Programmes

The agricultural development programmes were aimed at alleviating poverty through food sufficiency and food security which are cardinal in the attempt to reduce poverty and improve living conditions in Nigeria.

Notable of such agricultural programmes include:

- ❖National accelerated food production programmes (NAFPP). Introduced in 1973 to reduce the period between technology development and technology adoption.
- ❖River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs) 1976/1977. The purpose here was to harness water resources for rural and urban development and transformation.
- ❖Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) 1980. The particular objective of the coming on board of the ADPs was to achieve self sufficiency in major grains especially maize and rice with a view to reducing imports of such grains.
- ❖Strategic Grain Reserve Programme. The main objective of this was to achieve stable prices for grains by buying large quantities at harvest period and storing them to be released during scarcity periods. It was also meant to encourage rural farmers to get income so as to farm more.
- ❖Infrastructural Development (1986). The Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) was established to finance construction and rehabilitation of rural infrastructure which include roads, water supply earth dams and rural electrification.
- ❖Health and Social Development. The objective here was to address issues like primary health, Immunization, enlightenment of the people especially the rural ones, nomadic education programme.
- ❖Rural industrialization. The policy in rural industrialization was pursued by the government to accelerate poverty reduction in the rural areas of Nigeria.

The objective of this particular strategy was to

i. Diversify production in the rural areas
ii. Provide employment for the growing population with the aim of reducing rural – urban migration.
iii. Attract economic and social infrastructure by private investors to the rural areas.
iv. Increase value – added to rural products through local processing.

Other strategies were also initiated to tackle the problem of inadequate finance which was said to be hampering economic activities of the rural dwellers. Certain schemes were introduced including rural cooperatives, Rural Banking, Agricultural Credit Guaranteed Scheme, National Economic Reconstruction Fund,

Peoples Bank, Community Bank as well as Nigerian Agricultural Insurance Company. With such catalogue of strategies since 1970s, have Nigerians fared better? Has poverty decreased and has standard of living of the Nigerian people improved?

Factors Militating Against Successful Strategies

The questions posed above require answers. Nigeria ranks 10th from the bottom of the poverty ladder in the world. Furthermore, I out of every 10 Nigerians live on less than 1 United States dollar that is ₦150 per day. The paradox here is that Nigerian is regarded as one of the 20 counties in the world that are naturally endowed with mineral and natural resources. There is indeed a glaring disconnect between the level of poverty in Nigeria and the abundance of mineral as well as human resources.

The various strategies have not succeeded in alleviating poverty for the following reasons.

❖Insincerity on the part of those who design and implement poverty alleviating programmes. For example in recent past money budgeted and released for poverty alleviation found itself in the pockets of politicians in Nigeria.

❖Elite Capture: Most of the strategies adopted to reduce poverty in Nigeria suffer from: "Elite Capture", Social exclusion, lack of participation.

❖Policy Summersault or cosmetic empowerment programmes. There is abundant evidence of policy inconsistencies and lack of commitment to and deep rooted conviction regarding or towards the so called poverty alleviation programmes. Policy discontinuities abound as well as unfulfilled promises to the people. According to Langseth and Simpkins (2000) the more disempowered a person is the less hope he/she may have about either the value of participating in a programme or even the chances of some thing coming of it. Wadsworth (1998) also contends that if you are radically disempowered, you may not even be able to envisage something better. This certainly explains clearly the reasons for the cycle of poverty that has bedeviled Nigeria for decades now.

❖Natural phenomenon. Many rural people have for years been confronted by natural events like drought, desertification, wars, and conflicts that have inflicted heavy damage on their ability and capability to fend for themselves. The resultant effect has been poverty. Unfortunately, incidences of poverty if not effectively handled reinforce poverty.

What is The Way Forward

❖Since poverty has become endemic in Nigeria, and given that the attempts so far to tackle poverty appear to be cosmetic, it is recommended that a national policy on poverty and the rural sector of the country be put in place and credible people appointed to oversee its implementation. It is obvious that the current poverty alleviation programme is not producing the desired effect hence the need for refocusing and restrategising.

❖In the past many of the agricultural and rural programmes have been a Federal Government initiative. To ensure effectiveness and success of such programmes, there is therefore absolute need to involve the States and especially the Local Governments in any initiative to address rural and agricultural issues. This is because the Local Governments are closer to the rural people than the Federal Government.

❖The concept of bottom approach to wealth creation and poverty alleviation should be adopted. The concept is premised on the principle of total inclusion and involvement of the Local people in any design and programme of poverty alleviation. If ownership of such programme is domiciled at the locus of the community then the chances of successful would be brighter than when such programmes are conceived as imposed.

❖The principle of inclusion and participation should also be blended with empowerment. The rural people should be empowered in terms of giving seed money to start business, providing stipends to workable adults until their business starts yielding positive results, making the rural areas more attractive for habitation by provision of amenities. There should also be a deliberate policy to encourage the formation of economic and functional productive groups at the grassroot level. This is important since it has been found out that social capital works better in small groups.

❖The ineffectiveness of the various efforts to reduce poverty in Nigeria through agricultural and rural programmes has been the result of "elite capture": Many of such poverty alleviation programmes were designed to serve the interests of the same group of elites who pretend to be concerned about poverty in the country. Any poverty alleviation programme especially through agricultural and rural dimension must put people at the centre, exclude the elites, strengthen community linkages and provide some training to identified people in the rural community who will serve as the driving force of such programmes at the local levels. Everything must be done to cut off the deceitful elites.

The issues of sustainability of poverty alleviation programmes should be seriously addressed. Previous poverty alleviation programmes tended to be politically motivated hence observable discontinuities in terms of funding and management Genuine Funding mechanism must be put in place which is self sustaining and self driving. Institutional building and linkage between the Local Government, the rural comminutes and the State Government should and must be a permanent objective. This is critical because majority of the people served by state and Local Government live in the rural areas of the country

Conclusion

The incidence of poverty in Nigeria is on the increase. The various agricultural and rural programmes for poverty alleviation and improvement in the lives of the rural people and the poorest of the poor have failed to produce the desired impact. There is a need for new strategies. The new strategies would build on the culture of self help as part of rural life. In order to achieve the desired effect it, is recommended that a bottom up approach be adopted which is people centered and allows inclusion, participation and ownership of the programmes and projects: It is also concluded that the non realization of poverty reduction of agricultural and rural programmes as well as other poverty alleviation projects has been due to the fact that they suffer from elite capture, poor funding, lack of continuity and internalization and domicilisation of such programmes and projects.

The scourge of poverty is something that requires sustainable efforts, sincerity of purpose, total commitment and refocusing as well as restrategizing, if we are to avoid the mistakes of the past and if we wish to salvage the millions of Nigerians who are suffering the blistering psychological, sociological and the emotional effects of poverty then there should be sincerity, total commitment and purposeful leadership. The resources are certainly there to prosecute this social war against poverty. What is lacking is sincerity of purpose, the strategic will and the strategic resolve to tackle the problem.

Reference

Aigbokhan, Ben E (2000) – Poverty, Growth and Inequality in Nigeria; A case study. African Economic Constitution Publication 8th Floor, International House, Nairobi, Kenya.

Aluko, S.A (1975) "Poverty: Its remedies in Nigeria" Proceedings of 1975 Annual Conference of the Nigerian Economic Society, Ibadan.

Van zyl, Johan et al (19951 – Decentralized Rural Development and Enhanced Community Participation; A case study from North east Brazil Policy Research Working Paper 1498, The World Bank Washington

Oakley, Peter and David Marsden (1984) – "Approaches to participation in Rural Development, ILO Office, Geneva.

Cheetham, Russel J. (1991) – Urban Efficiency, Productivity and Economic Growth, Proceedings of the World Bank Annual Conference on Development Economics

Shivakumar, Sujai (2000) b- The Constitution on Development; Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis.

Sen, Amartya Kumar (1999) – Development as freedom, New York, Knopf.

Langseth, Peter and Piona Simpkins (2000) – Action Research and Governance Economic Management and Social Policy, World Bank, 156 April 2000

Ostrom, Elinor (1999) – Crowding out Citizenship; Scandinavian Political Studies.

Keyfitz, Nathan (1982) – Development and the Elimination of Poverty" Economic Development and Cultural Change 30: 649-70

Shah, Amip (2000) – Poverty facts and Stats: Global Issues, Global Organization Article 26.

Idachaba, Francis .E. (2004) – Food Security in Nigeria: Challenges Under Democratic Dispensation. Idachaba Foundation for Research and Scholarship Ibadan Nigeria.

Oblitas, Keith and J Raymond Peter (1999) – Transferring Irrigation Management to Farmer in Andhra Pradeshi India. The World Bank Was

Kerri, Graham, Keith McClean, Susanne Periousall and Melissa Williams (1998– Decentralization and Rural Development; Characterizing Efforts in 19 Countries, The World Bank.

Obadan, M.I (1997) – "Analytical Frame Work for Poverty Reduction: Issues of Economic Growth Versus other strategies "(Proceedings of the 1997 Annual Conference of the Nigeria Economic Society, Ibadan

Daura, Sango (2000) – Poverty Alleviation Programme in the Local Governments Key note address at workshop held in Ilorin , Kwara State 26-28 April 2000

Ajayi, O.O (2001) – Poverty and welfare in Nigeria. Encyclopedia of the Nations

The World Bank.

Porter, Michael (1995) – Towards a new Conception of the Environment;Competitiveness Relationship. Journal of Economic Perspectives (US); 9; 97 – 118

Agriculture Policy for Nigeria Federal Ministry of Agriculture Abuja, Nigeria.

Osuntogun, Adeniyi (2002) Applied Poverty – Environment Indicators The case of Nigeria.

Soludo Chukwuma .C. (2006) – Can Nigeria be the China of Africa?Lecture delivered at the founders' Day of the University of Benin, Nigeria

Madavo, Callisto (2000) – Community Driven Development in Africa: A vision of Poverty Reduction through Empowerment. The World Bank.

World Facts and Figures (2004) – GDP per capita by Country

National Empowerment and Development Strategy, NEEDS Nigeria; 2004.

Garba, Joseph (1995) – Fractured History: Elite shift and Policy Changes in Nigeria. Princeton Sungai Books 294P.

Table 1: Poverty Indicators in Nigeria

	1980 %	1985 %	1990 %	1992 %	1995 %	1996 %	1999 %	2003 %	2005 %
Incidence of poverty	28.1	46.3		42.70		65.9	70	54	70.1
GDP per capital US$	314	230	258		260		256		
GDP growth Rate %				3.0	1.3		4.3	3.9	2.8
Infant mortality Rate			87.2		114				

Sources: Federal office of statistic – Annual Abstract
Applied Poverty – Environment indicators 2002

Table 2: Social and Poverty Indicators In Selected African

	Year	Nigeria	Cot d'lvorie	Chana	Kenya	Zambia
GDP in US$	2000	800	1400	2200	1000	800
Population growth %	1995	2.9	3.6	3	2.8	3.1
Infant mortality	1994	114	90	74	59	108
Access to safe water %	1993	40	83	56	49	59

Sources: (i) Federal office of statistic
(ii) World facts and figures – GDP per capita by country

Table 3: Percentage of dwelling units by types of water supply

Type of water	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97
Pip borne	24.70	24.21	26.70	24.74
Borehole	7.00	9.61	10.40	15.41
Well	37.00	27.26	30.70	27.62
Stream / pond	31.30	38.91	32.10	32.23

Sources: Applied Poverty-Environment Indicator
The Case of Nigeria 2002

Table 4: Percentage distribution of households by type of toilet facilities

Type of water	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97
Pip borne	3.50	8.5	8.50	10.3
Borehole	1.90	0.96	1.00	1.40
Well	63.30	61.36	61.60	56.97
Stream / pond	31.30	29.10	28.90	31.33

Source: Applied – Environment Indicators
The Case of Nigeria 2002

Table 5: Corruption Index In West Africa

Items	Nigeria Percentage	Ghana Percentage	Cote' Devoir %	Liberia %	Benin %	Ginea Bissau%	Sierra Leone%
Bribery to Government officials	87.3	56.7	55	44.4	40	-	-
Bribery freight officials	23.6	6.7	14	-	-	16.7	-
Embezzlement misappropriation diversion of property by government officials	86.6	-	-	-	52	66.7	82.4
Illegal transfer or taking money abroad	57	-	-	45.5	-	36.1	35.3
Contract inflation	86.1	56.7	-	45.5	28	55.56	82.4
Bribery and embezzlement in the private sector	41.6	10	-	22.7	12	-	44.1
Gross abase of office	79.7	46.7	-	-	-	95.8	76.5

Source: Report of Intergovernmental Action Groups Against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA) An Agency of ECOWAS 2010.