

Effect of poverty eradication strategies on improved wellbeing of rural Nigeria: A review

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International Journal of Frontiers in Science and Technology Research, 2021, 01(02), 046–055

Publication history: Received on 27 October 2021; revised on 12 December 2021; accepted on 14 December 2021

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53294/ijfstr.2021.1.2.0050>

Abstract

Despite the various poverty eradication/alleviation programmes and strategies adopted by various governments in Nigeria, over 93 million Nigerians still live in poverty, with at least three million sliding into extreme poverty between November 2018 and February 2019 (Olayinka, 2019). This is a clear indication of the ineffectiveness of these policies and programmes, which is attributable to corruption, high level of inequality in income distribution, low literacy rate and poor skill set, political instability, and poor leadership. The major challenge every responsive and responsible government must contend with is to make life better and more meaningful to the citizenry irrespective of whether such government is a democratic one or a military dictator if the regime is to have relevance and continue to enjoy legitimacy in the eyes of the governed. Every successive government since independence has put up one strategy or the other aimed at eradicating the sufferings of the people and put smiles on the faces of the governed. This paper critically examined the various poverty eradication programmes, reforms and strategies, which had been undertaken by successive Nigerian governments and the reasons behind the success/failure of these programmes. The paper articulated and proffered useful strategies that if faithfully implemented would lead the nation out of the present dungeon of poverty and set the nation on the right map of sustainable economic development and not just on economic growth which it has persistently witnessed over the years.

Keywords: Poverty; Alleviation; Strategies; Improved wellbeing; Ruralites

1. Introduction

Poverty is a generic term which affects morality, knowledge, economy, politics and character. Here the interest is on poverty as experienced by individuals and families, and the inability of a large proportion of the population to share in a country's wealth. Poverty of an individual's economy means to be persistently and unchangeably lacking in basic necessities of life (food, shelter, clean water, clothing, medicine, education, knowledge, electricity) [1].

Every country has a responsibility within the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to contribute positively towards the reduction of poverty (World Bank, 2000b). In Nigeria, there is a seemingly active and elaborate public sector response. Although the government seems to be concerned, progress has been minimal [3].

Poverty is not restricted to any particular sector of the economy. It is a major development problem; and to the extent that it has economy wide causes and consequences, it cannot be eradicated through hastily implemented adhoc programmes. [2] posit that 'a properly articulated and carefully planned development strategy in which poverty

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reduction is brought into the mainstream in all domains of development and public policy should be preferred to sporadic and episodic responses in different strata of the society'. The objective of the paper is to advocate for the systematic elimination of poverty in Nigeria. Perhaps, the major problem facing African nations today, is the eradication of poverty which every government has built in as part of its developmental programmes (5). In fact, the major challenge every responsive and responsible government must contend with in Africa today is to make life better and more meaningful to the citizenry irrespective of whether such a government is a democratic one or a military dictatorship if such a government is to continue to have relevance and enjoy legitimacy in the eyes of the governed.

Successive government in Nigeria since independence has put up one strategy or the other aimed at eradicating the sufferings of the people and put continuous smiles on the faces of the governed. The prevalence of mass poverty reflects the poor management and performance of the nation's economy. The level of economic performance of any country depends primarily on two factors. These are the level of resources available relative to population, and the level of productivity. Nigeria belongs to the group of poor countries with a high level of resources but low level of productivity and mismanagement of the abundant God-given resources. Substantial amount of revenue from these God-given resources are allegedly stolen and stock in foreign accounts. The meaning of poverty is very wide and elastic. It means different things to different people in different contexts and circumstances. The most basic meanings according to (7) are as follows:

- The quality or condition of being poor
- The condition of having little or no wealth or material possession, destitution or want
- Deficiency, dearth, scarcity, smallest of amounts
- Deficiency in proper or desired quality
- Poor condition of leanness or feebleness resulting from insufficient nourishment, etc.
- In relation to people, the basic concept of poverty refers to a serious inadequacy of economic condition, a situation of individual, group or regional lack or deprivation of what are considered the necessities for acceptable living standards or not having access to a conducive environment and facilities and opportunities for decent living standards.

1.1 Poverty: A conceptual framework

The positive feedback theory, or vicious cycle of poverty, holds that poverty breeds poverty, it occurs through time and transmits its effects from one generation to another. According to (6), 'there is no beginning to the cycle, no end' (see Figure 1).

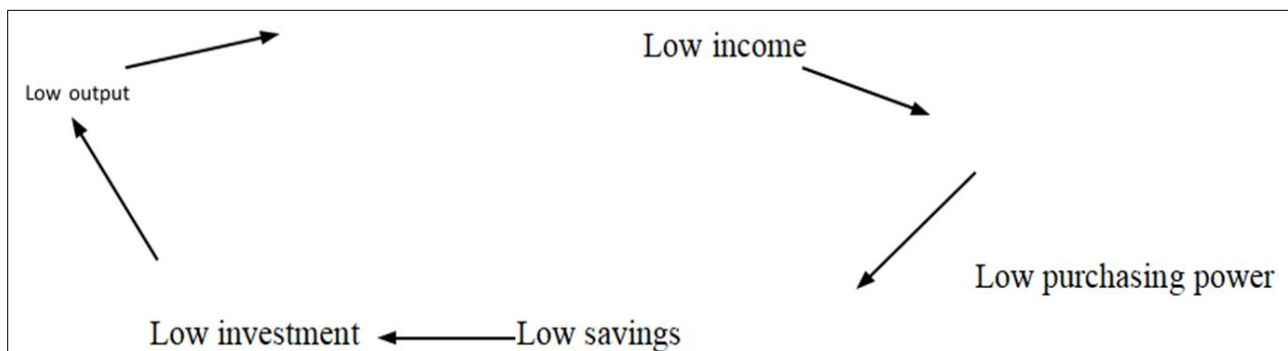


Figure 1 The cyclical nature of poverty in Nigeria (9)

Poverty as a positive feedback system implies that it is a system in which each part reinforces the others and so maintains the system as a whole. In Nigeria inputs to the system from external sources to change this cyclical nature of poverty are either blocked and diverted for personal use by government officials (8), or the beneficiaries themselves squander the help (Kazeem, 2018); that is, the various circumstances of the poor combine to maintain them in poverty. The poor combine to maintain them in poverty. They are trapped in the situation with little chance of escaping (8).

This is the culture of poverty, which is a design for living that is transmitted from one generation to the next. This is where poverty in Nigeria resides. To conceptualize otherwise, that poverty, like wealth, is an inevitable consequence of a capitalist system, is to be fatalistic [10].

2. Theoretical frame work

Poverty as explained in this paper goes beyond the contemporary meaning of low-level income; rather, it is found to be multi-dimensional in nature. Thus, its definition and subsequent measurement cannot be pegged on a single criterion. It has political, social and economic dimensions; hence measurements that focus on the economic aspect only are bound to be inadequate. The World development Report (2000/2001) as summarized by (7) emphasizes various dimensions of poverty. These include:

- Lack of opportunities -This is a low level of consumption and income, usually relative to a national poverty line. This is associated with the level and distribution of human capital and social and physical assets such as land and market opportunities that determine their returns to these assets.
- Low Capabilities -Little or no improvements in health and education indicators among a particular socio-economic group.
- Low Level Security -Exposure of risk and income shock that may arise at the Individual levels
- Empowerment -Capability of poor people to participate in exchange

Many statistics have shown that good governance and rapid economic development result in poverty reduction. Domestic national policies coupled with prudent macro-economic management, more open market and a stable and predictable environment are important effects on sustainable growth and development. According to (11), poverty is hunger; lack of shelter, being sick and not being able to go to school, not knowing how to read; not being able to speak properly, not having a job; fear for the future, losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water; powerlessness; lack of representation and freedom.

3. Basic elements of poverty

Two basic elements of poverty are usually recognized: absolute poverty and relative poverty. Absolute poverty refers to a condition under which there is a serious deficiency or lack of access to the basic necessities of normal life such as food, clothing, housing, health and education services as explained by African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF, 1998). Relative poverty relates to the condition of an individual, household, group or community when considered against some reference, standard or parameter such as the average for the group or region, a target standard or objective, or its ranking on given criteria. In the final analysis however, all concepts of poverty are relative. Thus even when we speak of absolute poverty, we refer to existence below a reference standard of living. (11) (13) analyses poverty from five dimensions of deprivation:

- Personal and physical deprivation experienced as a result of health, nutritional, literacy and educational disability and lack of self-confidence.
- Economic deprivation drawn from the lack of access to property, income, assets, factors of production and finance.
- Social deprivation as a result of denial from full participation in social, political and economic activities
- Cultural deprivation in terms of lack of access to values, beliefs, knowledge, information and attitudes which deprives the people of control of their own destinies and;
- Political deprivation in terms of lack of political voice to participate in decision making that affects their lives.

The World Development Report {2002} estimates a large number of people who are struggling to survive on less than US \$370 a year -or a dollar a day. As at today, more than one billion people in the developing world continue to live and wallow in poverty. Poverty is highly visible in most African countries. On the dollar-a-day measure, about 210 million people in sub-Saharan Africa are in poverty, and their numbers continue to grow. In south Asia the share of the population in poverty is about 500 million people. {12}

{18} asserted that the most frequently used measurements are:

- The head count poverty index given by the percentage of the population that live in the household with a consumption per capita less than the poverty line.
- The poverty gap index which reflects the depth of poverty by taking into account, how far the average poor person's income is from the poverty line.
- The distributional sensitive measure of squared poverty gap which reflects the severity of poverty (14).

4. Measurement of poverty

Past studies by the United Nations Development Programme {UNDP} advocate the use of the Human Development Index {HDI} and Capability Poverty Measure {CPM} to measure the severity of poverty. According to the UNDP [16], HDI combines three components in the measurement of poverty -life expectancy at birth; educational attainments; and improvement in standard of living determined by per capita income. The first relates to survival, i.e. vulnerability to death at a relatively early age. The second relates to knowledge, i.e. being excluded from the world of reading and communication. The third relates to a decent living standard in terms of overall economic empowerment. CPM however, focuses on the average capabilities of the people by reflecting on the percentage of those who lack basic, essential human capabilities which, as end in themselves, are needed to rise from a position of income poverty to one of the sustained human development {15}.

5. Previous empirical studies on poverty

The World Bank as cited in Catherine and James (2003) has called special attention to the causes of mass poverty in sub-Saharan Africa, the most basic being lack of access to skills, facilities and opportunities. The reasons behind such lack of access relate to the patterns of social and economic inequality. In a situation of mass poverty such as we have in Nigeria, where poverty is the lot of the generality of the people rather than the misfortune of a few, the primary reason of poverty must be sought not in the circumstances of individuals but in the state of the nation and its management. As observed (16), the most developed countries in the world today include some countries very poor in physical resources while the poorest countries include some of the most richly endowed with physical resources like Nigeria.

(13), asserts that some of the problems militating against the effort of poverty eradication in the third world nations include: lack of employment especially for the school leavers at all levels, slow economic growth, inflation, lack of social services, instability of exchange rate, political instability etc. The world bank report (1990), cited in (1), identified four measures to increase income of the poor. These are: increasing the demand and therefore, the price for those factors of production that the poor own, transferring physical asset such as land to the poor, providing social service such as education of the poor and transfer of current income to the poor through cash or food subsidies. These measures can help in minimizing the incidence of poverty in Africa. [16] attributed the decline in living standard to structural causes or determinate of poverty which includes increase in crime and violence, environmental detraction, retrenchment of workers and changes in family structures.

(4) in his empirical analysis of the poverty rate in Ilorin, Nigeria, using the p-alpha class of poverty measurement found that the rate of poverty in Ilorin is slightly high with 58% of the population falling below the poverty line. He attributed these to problem of urban development and can be rectified by a rise in incomes in both the organized formal and the informal sectors to bring about a reduction. Poverty can involve not only lack of the necessities but also the denial of opportunities for living a tolerable life. Omoniyi (2013) stated three most critical criteria which UNDP uses for determining the existence of poverty are the individual's ability to lead along and healthy life, to be educated and to enjoy a decent standard of living.

(6) in his findings on the study of rural poverty in sub-Saharan with special emphasis on Cote d'Ivoire, deduced that the standard of living of the population is strongly linked to the socioeconomic group that the group belongs to. The result of the regression model showed that the size of the household has a strong impact on the standard of living. The percentage of people employed in the household contributes significantly to increase the expenditure for head in the household. (10) believes that corruption has affected previous poverty reduction initiatives in Nigeria. This is also true of most African nations. The effect of corruption is both direct and indirect on the poverty increase. The indirect effect follows from the reduction or misapplication of resources, which penalizes growth rate and growth potentials. The small and medium enterprise sub-sector is characterized by large informal activities. It denotes economic activities related to the poor, otherwise unemployed unskilled labour in urban centers.

6. Overview of poverty in Nigeria

The United Nations said Nigeria had an estimated population of 124,009,000 in 2003, which placed it tenth in population among the 193 nations of the world. In 2007 the population was estimated at 135,031,160. This is nearly one-quarter of sub-Saharan Africa's population. It is also estimated that one in every six black people in the world is a Nigerian. The country has more than 200 ethnic groups, with three major tribes, the Igbo in the east, the Hausa-Fulani (north) and the Yoruba (west). More than 500 indigenous languages and dialects are spoken. The average life expectancy at birth is 54 years (Government of Nigeria, 2005).

In Nigeria there has been a sharp decline in general human living conditions since 1975. Available data indicate that from 1980 to 2016, real income per head, private consumption and overall physical, economic, social and psychological well-being has gone below universally accepted levels. In fact statistics shows that poverty levels increased between 1980 and 1996; and the number of people in poverty increased dramatically. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (1997, 1998) reported that, in terms of quality of life index, Nigeria scored 38 percent in 1991. This translates to a very low standard of living, with about 70 percent of the population living on less than \$1 a day. In 1998, the human development index (HDI) was 0.391, placing the country at 142nd out of the 174 countries surveyed, and in 2000 the HDI score for Nigeria was 0.439. This figure puts the country at the 151st position among 174 countries. In terms of spatial distribution, the majority of poor people are located in the rural areas [3].

The evolutionary trajectory of poverty in Nigeria indicates that there have always been a significant number of people living below the poverty line. In Nigeria, average income per head is about \$1,000, compared with \$32,000 in the USA (7). The current federal government Poverty Alleviation Program, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) (Government of Nigeria, 2005) acknowledged that 'poverty eradication is the most difficult challenge facing Nigeria and its people and the greatest obstacle to the pursuit of sustainable socioeconomic growth.

7. Poverty Eradication/Alleviation

The various regimes in Nigeria have always publicly fought poverty. The government may or may not use the term 'poverty eradication/reduction', but several agencies together with ministries have been concerned with poverty eradication/alleviation strategies. The federal government of Nigeria has introduced a range of measures aimed at reducing, cushioning and eradicating poverty among the citizenry. But the intended results were not most of the time realised. With the establishment of Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs). Other agencies were established over the years, all with the aim of ameliorating the effects of poverty. They all suffered the same fate of inept administration and political hypocrisy in truncating what might otherwise have been theoretically sound initiatives [14].

8. Root Causes of Poverty in Nigeria

It is evident that the causes of poverty are numerous. The question that arises in the minds of the people is why poverty is more rampant today in Africa than any other region of the world, even though, almost without exception, many of the newly independent African states had identified poverty reduction as a primary policy objective more than thirty years ago. African Medical and Research Foundation - AMREF (8) in a poverty survey in Kisumu district, Kenya, identified environmental, historical, political, demographic and personal factors as major causes of poverty in the district.

(9) the main factor that cause poverty in sub-Saharan African include: Inadequate access to employment opportunities, inadequate physical assets, such as land and capital (the poor have minimal access to credit even on a small scale); inadequate access to the means of supporting rural development in poor regions; poor access to markets where goods and services can be sold; low endowment of human capital; degradation and reduced productivity; inadequate access to assistance for those living at the margin and the victims of transitory poverty; and finally failure to involve people in the design of development programmers that affect them.

(1) **identify** causes of poverty as large family size; low level of human capital; lack of access to cultivable land; absence of or inadequate access to all weather roads and markets. Other factors are low farm productivity; poor health status of an individual; and culture and social values, which have unfavorable bearing on work ethics; drug and alcohol abuse and certain types of family structure (polygamy, single parent households).

The Economic policy Research centre (9) identifies the main cause of poverty to be civil strife, economic crisis and the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

(16) reiterates that the cause of poverty includes:

- Structural causes that are more permanent and dependent on a host of (exogenous) factors such as limited resources, lack of skills, location disadvantage and other social and political factors. The disabled, orphans, landless farmers, households headed by females fall into these Categories.
- Transitional causes occasioned by structural adjustment reforms and changes in domestic economic policies that may result in price changes, unemployment and so on. Natural calamities such as wars, environmental degradation and so on also induce transitional poverty.

Poverty can also be the result of the problem of urbanization (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. It has been observed that local authorities have, over the years, cut expenditure on infrastructure development and raised tax rates. These policies 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 resident of the community who are less likely to move.

According to (2), causes of poverty in sub-Saharan Africa include.

Inadequate access to employment opportunities.

Inadequate physical assets, such as land and capital and minimal access by the poor to credit even on a small scale.

Inadequate access to the 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

Lack of education is one of the significant causes of poverty in Nigeria. The National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education revealed that more than 38% of Nigerians are illiterates. The inability to function in society due to the absence of knowledge and skill set leads to poverty. Empirical studies (11) have revealed the implications of human resource underdevelopment to poverty in Nigeria.

Corruption is also a major cause of poverty in Nigeria. According to Transparency International, Nigeria is ranked the 144th least corrupt nation in the world, out of 180 countries. This portrays the high level of corruption in the country. Corruption undermines the rule of law and threatens socio-economic development. It as well increases poverty by retarding investment and employment opportunities. It reduces revenue from tax as well as the effectiveness of government intervention programs. According to (17), corruption diverts government spending away from socially valuable goods such as education and health.

The unstable political environment can also be observed to be a root cause of poverty in Nigeria. Political instability hurts economic growth, which precipitates poverty. A clear example is the Northern Nigeria crises where the war against Boko Haram has destroyed the economy of North-east Nigeria, Also, the rampaging Fulani-Herdsmen menace has destroyed farmlands, leaving people of mostly punishment for corrupt public office holders has continuously resulted in the diversion of funds meant for development projects, which trickles down to poor infrastructural development and social welfare, resulting to poverty.

8.1 Previous programmes aimed at eradicating poverty in Nigeria

To reduce poverty various schools of thought advocates a number of measures (Mendonca 2017). Nigeria gain her political independent on October 1, 1960 from the British government. With political independence, various successive government had taken different strategies aimed at eradicating /alleviating poverty and thereby making Nigerians to be self-reliant economically. The following strategies amongst others have been undertaken by successive Nigerian governments.

- At independence, government first attempt was the farm settlement centre. This attempt was to develop the food-sub sector for both the cash crop and the food crop.

Few years later, the programme was short lived as it was described a failure by the Gowon Administration that came in 1967.

- The General Gowon Administration later introduced the agricultural Development project (ADP) in 1973. The ADP was then jointly financed by the World Bank and the Federal and State governments.

The programme was then aimed at promoting integrated rural development.

- The Olusegun Obasanjo administration in 1976 introduced the defunct operation feed the nation (OFN). The major aim of the OFN programme was to raise the awareness of Nigerians towards self-sufficiency in food production. With all the money pumped into OFN, the programme did not produce the expected appreciable positive result at increasing food production.
- Again, the Obasanjo government promulgated a decree to ensure that land-tenure system was abolished that all land belongs to the government. The policy was aimed at ensuring that people were not hindered in their attempt to farm. It was believed that with more food production, there would be better standard of living for the citizenry.
- During the second republic (1979 – 1983), former president Shehu Shagari introduced the "Green Revolution". Though Nigerian forest had been green before the green revolution, the programme again could not go far as there was no zeal and commitment by the operators of the programme.

Again, during the second Republic, the government introduced "austerity measures". It was a policy aimed at ensuring that people spend wisely. The austerity measure came in as a result of the extravagance spending of the civilian government of the second republic both at state and at the federal levels.

- The Babangida regime in 1986 introduced "the structural Adjustment Programme" (SAP). It was a programme, which was aimed at making Nigeria reliance industrially. Though SAP in principle was a good programme, but the then government of the country was not committed to its faithful implementation.
- Another major step aimed at alleviating poverty in Nigeria is the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) by the Babaginda Administration. The NDE's sole aim then was to reduce unemployment with greater emphasis on self-reliance and entrepreneurship. The programme was very laudable but it was not faithfully implemented.
- The Directorate of foods, roads and rural infrastructure (DFRRI) was another laudable programme by the Babangida government (1985 - 1993) which was aimed at alleviating poverty.

The main aim of DFRRI was to open-up rural areas, construct feeder roads and bridges, water supply etc. Again, the officials in charge of DFRRI became corrupt and the programme lost focus.

- The Peoples Bank was another laudable programme by the Babangida Administration, which was aimed at giving small loans to small and medium scale enterprises. As laudable as the programme was, it suffered same fate of the "Nigerian factor" of corruption.
- The better life for rural women, was initiated by the wife of former president Babangida. The programme was aimed at raising the standard of living of rural women. Though the programme was good, it was hijacked by urban elite women. Nigeria then believed that the faces they were seeing on Better Life programme were not that of rural women but that of urban elite and affluent women.
- It must be noted that government created the family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) in 1997, which was meant to be giving loans to Nigerians. Again, officials in charge of this programme turned it to a family project with Nepotism, being the order of the day.
- The Obasanjo Administration set up Nigerian Economic Policy in 1999-2003. The programme was to enable Nigerians to be better placed towards articulating ways of using its subsequent annual budget to realize the developmental goals stated in their policy statement.

The Olusegun Obasanjo administration since inception in 1999 put up a number of measures aimed at alleviating the suffering of Nigerian masses. Such policies include:

- The adoption of measures to stimulate production and broaden the supply base of the Nigerian economy.
- The government has also reformed the tariff policies on a number of times with the aim of promoting industrial diversification and economic sustenance.
- The deregulation of the nation's economy, which was aimed at returning many government businesses to private hands in order to promote efficiency. It is believed that with efficiency, there will be better and more production of goods and services which will improve the living standard of the people.

- The recent debt reduction/cancellation crusade is another bold step aimed at alleviating poverty. With debt reduction, managing the funds which had hitherto been used to service debts could now be judiciously spent internally to improve the living standard of Nigerians.

9. Problems associated with poverty in Nigeria

- One of the major consequences of poverty in Nigeria is mortality and in particular, infant and maternal mortality. This is due to lack of funds required for basic care for infants as well as the inability to provide quality healthcare service for pregnant women. (7) points to the fact that high rate of maternal and child mortality is as a result of poverty, where women and children cannot access healthcare services. Data from the World Development Indicators of the World Bank (2019) has shown that average maternal mortality rate between 1990 and 2015 stood at 1057.8 per 100,000 live births while infant mortality rate between 1964 and 2017 averaged 122 per 1,000 live birth. These statistics are pointers to the fact that Nigeria has not been able to meet up with the target of the sustainable development goals of the United Nations such as reducing under 5 mortality to as low as 25 per 1,000 live births and maternal mortality of 70 per 100,000 live births.
- Poverty is also a major factor that is significantly affecting education in Nigeria. Report from the United Nations International Children Emergency Fund shows that about 10.5 million of the country's children aged 5-14 years are not in school. In Northern Nigeria, the picture is more severe, with only 53% net attendance. Invariably, poverty has been observed to be a major factor leading to a low rate of school enrolment in Nigeria. Also, poverty may increase the likelihood of criminal activities. Adekoya and Abdul-Razak (2016) observe a long-run relationship between crime and poverty in Nigeria. When people don't have enough income to meet the basic necessities of life, there is always high probability that they will seek alternative means of survival, which in most cases is crime.

9.1 Measures of eradicating or reducing poverty in Nigeria

Various measures to eradicate or reduce the level of poverty have been put in place by various governments in Nigeria, but poverty continued to eat deep into the fabrics of Nigeria as a nation. Some of the measures likely to eradicate poverty includes:

9.1.1 Increase in literacy rate and skill development

One of the major steps in reducing poverty in Nigeria is through education. Quality education can provide a lasting solution to poverty in Nigeria. Omoniyi (2013) reveals that quality education improves economic efficiency by expanding labour force value and efficiency, and subsequently moving people out of poverty. According to UNICEF, one in every five out-of-school children in the world is in Nigeria, with the situation looking more severe in Northern Nigeria. This invariably creates the poverty problem due to lack of human capital development. In 2015, adult literacy rate was about 40% of the total population.

9.1.2 Fight against corruption

Unlike education which reduces poverty in the long- run, fight against corruption leads to an immediate reduction in level of poverty. Hence, there is need for a total fight against corruption, and effective monitoring of public finances. Similarly, the lack of major cause of poverty in Nigeria is the fragility of the economy due to over dependency on oil revenue. There is thus, an urgent need for the diversification of economic activities to create opportunities for Nigerians and ensure stability of the economy. Diversifying the Nigerian economy and improving value addition in the agriculture sector can aid the reduction of poverty. Aku et al. (2000) points to the fact that the majority of agricultural produce in Nigeria is sold raw leading to lower returns to farmers. The Food and Agricultural Organization, (2018) also revealed that over 50% of farm produce in Nigeria is rural-based and below commercial value.

9.1.3 Income redistribution

Finally, we emphasize the importance of redistribution of income. This simply means, reduction in wages and allowances for high-income earners (particularly, the political class), and increase in wages and allowances for low- and middle-income earners. This will boost overall productivity through an increase in demand, thereby increasing employment and reducing poverty.

10. Conclusion

Poverty remains the undisputed prime killer in Nigeria. Nigerian governments (1975–2020) have succeeded in articulating and theorizing poverty and various reduction strategies to the applause of the international and local financial experts. But there are no practical outcomes that have alleviated poverty. Nigerians are getting poorer, as illustrated by numerous studies Sen, 2000; Ngoma and Mayimbo, 2017; Mendonca, 2017; Omoniyi, 2013; Donald, 2003 and Kazeem, 2018;. That corruption is a block to alleviating poverty in Nigeria is not news (Donald, 2003)

The government must therefore legislate against bad governance, corruption and ineptitude of politicians and officials in order to break the cycle of poverty for individuals. This article concludes by reiterating that: ‘Nigerians are poor because the past governments had been selfish in their dealings with the governed. They were busy appropriating and privatizing the tax payers’ and public enterprises respectively. That is why Nigeria with all those “petrol-dollars” since 1975, is still in the business of alleviating poverty and not quite succeeding in it’ (MEwubare and Mark,[18].

Recommendations

No matter how diverse poverty is, the coping strategies cluster around some common themes. The most common is to supplement one's income through farming, casual labour, trading, and engaging in other petty business activities etc.

To this end, I make the bold call on all that, Nigeria's best poverty eradication programme is back to farm i.e. agriculture. A household that cannot feed itself will either go without food or result to begging. Nigerian government needs to take bold steps in resuscitating Nigerian agricultural programme. Government needs to be involved in a number of ways.

- Government needs to back up farmers with needed fertilizers and farming implements, insecticides, and high yielding crops, amongst others. Experience has shown that when physical cash is given to farmers in form of loans, such funds or cash is always diverted to other unproductive means or non-farming.
- A more important strategy is “direct government intervention programme” - “The Youth Agricultural Revolution”

Compliance with ethical standards

Acknowledgments

I wish to on behalf of all authors of this manuscript acknowledge all sources of literature reviewed.

Disclosure of conflict of interest

There was no conflict of interest what so ever because all the authors that appeared on the manuscript contributed significantly in making this publication process a success.

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