

Women and Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Nigeria: The Napep Approach

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Doi:10.5901/ajis.2013.v2n3p515

Abstract

Nigeria had embarked on many policies and programmes to reduce poverty and create job opportunities for her citizenry especially, among women. One of such programmes is the Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP) under the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). This study did an empirical assessment of the Capacity Acquisition Programme in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State, Ibadan Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive survey design of the ex-post facto type. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select 256 women who participated in NAPEP Capacity Acquisition Programme in year 2008. "Women empowerment scale" ($r = 0.87$) was used for data collection. These were complimented with 4 sessions of Focus Group Discussion (FGDs). Two hypotheses were tested at 0.01 level of significance. Data were analysed using multiple regression. NAPEP's empowerment programme influenced women socio-economic empowerment ($r = -195$ $N = 250$, $P < 01$) and ($r = 267^{**}$ $N = 250$, $P < 01$). However, national poverty eradication capacity acquisition programme influenced women's economic empowerment negatively because NAPEP did not credit facilities to the beneficiaries. Government, donor agencies non-governmental organizations should provide more centres, credit facilities to beneficiaries, encourage women mainstreaming and put in place proper monitoring and evaluation of such programmes

Keywords: National poverty eradication programme, capacity acquisition programme, women empowerment, women mainstreaming.

1. Introduction

Today, no society has succeeded in eliminating poverty completely perhaps, the reason Kankwenda (2001) averred that: The global challenge posed to mankind by the scourge of poverty is unparalleled

... about 12 million children die each year before reaching the fifth birthday and daily, more than 800 million people including women and children go to bed on empty stomach. Like war, poverty leaves its trail, among its many victims, those whose lives are permanently blighted – under nourished and stunted children, overworked and undervalued women, and an-unsure world.(Kankwenda, 2001 p. 120)

The menace of poverty can be felt all over the world from the degree of its manifestation in unemployment, starvation conflict, crime, war and the like but, it is more prevalent in some regions than the other.

Poverty is prevalent in developing countries. The region is described by Jonathan (2004) as

The world's least developed area plagued by disease, misery, economic underdevelopment, high illiteracy, unstable and often repressive governments, civil war and conflicts, absence of strong national institution, lack of social safety equipment, failed states, inadequate health care and doctors, ungovernability, weak institutions, mass starvation and absence of hope. Virtually every problem that one can think of associated with the vicious circles of underdevelopment is present in Africa. It also has, as a correlate of the above, the weakest civil society of all the areas surveyed here. (Jonathan, 2004 p. 5)

The description of Jonathan could not have been more appropriate in sub-Saharan Africa which does not exclude Nigeria. Nigeria is endowed with both human and natural resources. She has a minimum of twenty (20) mineral resources, favourable condition for agriculture in food and cash crops and skilled individual that have excelled in their professions and the global economy. (Eboh, 2012). Nigeria lives in a paradox of her wealth (World Bank, 1996).

Evidences abound that poverty is on the increase in Nigeria. For instance, in 1960 the level of poverty was about 15%, by 1980 it grew to 28.0%. In 1985 it was 46.0% but dropped to 43% in 1992. By 1996 it was about 66% (Aliyu, 2001). Between 2004 and 2010, Nigeria's poverty level rose from 54.4%, to 69% with a Gross Domestic Growth (GDP)

which had little impact on the country's poverty level. By 2011 relative poverty had risen to about 71.5%, absolute 61.9% and per dollar a day 62.8% respectively (National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) as quoted by Subair, 2012)

Nigeria's Human Development Index was only 0.416, this rates Nigeria as one of the 25 poorest nations in the world. Nigeria's life expectancy at birth was 51 years, literacy rate 44% and 70% of the rural population do not have access to potable water, health care facilities and electricity (World Bank, 1991 as quoted by Aliyu, 2001).

Poverty in general and extreme poverty in particular has a significant gender dimension in developing countries including Nigeria. Women comprise the majority of the population below the poverty line and are very often in situation of extreme poverty given, the harsh relatives of intra-household and social discrimination. A growing number of households are unable to meet their basic needs. The number of female-headed households multiplied in the urban and rural areas. Women face a combination of increased family responsibilities and diminished economic prospects.

There had been attempts at alleviating poverty in Nigeria in the past these include, the National Accelerated Food Production Programme and the Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank in 1972. The Operation Feed the Nation of 1976, the Green Revolution Programme in 1979, the Go Back to Land Programme, the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) for rural development in 1986, which would have provided infrastructure for rural dwellers, but failed.

The Better Life and Family Support programmes of the wives of military Heads of States. All these turned either tangential or white elephant programmes. The programmes only served as conduit pipes to the elite and made the rich, richer. Poverty remains high in Nigeria and women are very much affected. No wonder Ihonvbere (2008) asserts that:

we have always had a bureaucracy just as we have had dependence, underdevelopment, instability, corruption, waste, misplaced priorities and poverty (Ihonvbere, 2008 p. 6).

Similarly, Kankwenda (2001) posits that:

the problem of poverty in Nigeria is poor targeting, lack of coordination, lack of transparency, lack of sustainability, lack of ownership, the top down recipient syndrome, too narrow focus, too broad scope, too thin spread, too frequent changes and bad governance in general. (Kankwenda, 2001 p. 122)

Women constitute about half the country's population. However, trained women form an insignificant percentage of the total skilled force in Nigeria partly, because they were not exposed to education early enough, a factor of incidence of poverty. Besides, there is high level of female illiteracy in Nigeria (Adelabu, and Adepoju (2007) Alese, (2010) and this explains why majority of them are engaged in the informal sector of the economy.

The manifestation of poverty in less developed countries, made the international community to place priority on poverty reduction. It also took the issue of poverty among women seriously through policies and strategies as Caldwell (2006) affirms that:

recognizing the strong proven links between gender equality and poverty reduction, the United Nations Millennium summit in 2000 endorse the aim to promote gender equality and empower women which is to be reached by all nations by 2015 .

This grew out of the recognition that inequalities between men and women could continue to hamper social and economic development worldwide.

The gender concern of poverty is gaining momentum in the country for it is evident that cultural barriers and government policies have done a big dent on the potentials of women in the past. Young females are often exposed to poverty induced nutritional and health risks within households. Girls drop out of school to take care of siblings which result in low education and low paid jobs from one generation to the next. These limit their economic activities and autonomy (Ajakaye, and Olomola 2003 as quoted by Alese 2010).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank are among international donor institutions assisting developing economies to reduce poverty. The UNDP undertook a number of important studies on poverty eradication in developing countries and many including Nigeria have had their Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) and offices for planning and monitoring poverty reduction policies.

With the Nigerian Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in place and the recognition of the economic problems of Nigerians, both males and females, she set to implement her own poverty reduction programme in 2001 and thus embarked on the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). This is also in recognition of the fact that corruption has dogged the nation and all efforts to alleviate poverty since independence in 1960. The salient principle of

NAPEP is partnership and participatory involvement of eradicating absolute poverty. NAPEP thus, has the involvement of the Federal, State and Local Government the International donor Agency, Community Based Organisations and Civil Society Organisations.

NAPEP aims at eradicating absolute poverty among the citizenry. It involves four schemes which are:

- Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES)
- Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS)
- Social Welfare Services Scheme (SOWESS) and
- Natural Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS) (NAPEP, 2001)

The Youth Empowerment Scheme consists, Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP) Mandatory Attachment Programme (MAP) and Credit Delivery Programme (CDP).

The Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS) consists, Rural Transport Programme (RTP), Rural Energy Programme (REP) Rural Water Programme (RWP) and Rural Communication Programme (RCP). The Social Welfare Services Scheme (SOWESS) consists Qualitative Education Programme (QEP), Primary Health Care Programme (PHP) Farmers Empowerment Programme (FEP) and Social Service Programme (SSP)

The National Resource Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS) consists Agricultural Resource Programme (ARP) Water Resource Programme (WRP) Solid Minerals Resource Programme (SMRP) and Environmental Protection Programme (EPP) (Aliyu 2001 p. 33)

This paper focuses on the Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP) of NAPEP. CAP was designed to enable participants irrespective of their sex and levels of formal education acquire skills, vocational capabilities and performance enhancing attributes in their chosen areas of engagement (FGN, 2001)

The concept of CAP is to recruit, retrain and redeploy the creative capacity of the people to enable them play more productive and self-fulfilling roles in the emerging economic dispensation.

The Capacity Acquisition Programme has the following objectives:

- a. to improve on the basic knowledge and experience of participants;
- b. encourage the jobless school leavers to choose practical fields of livelihood;
- c. equip school drop outs with vocational skill to partly make for their academic deficiencies and enable them channel a more fulfilling course of livelihood;
- d. improve the quality and technological contents of technicians and artisans' trades and practice;
- e. introduce participants to basic business management concepts to enable them fit into related jobs in big industrial set ups
- f. enable participants understand industrial operation to make them fit into related jobs in industrial set ups;
- g. enhance and upgrade training facilities of the various training centres in the country with a view to making their delivery system more effective and efficient;
- h. improve the quality of entrants into various levels of the labour markets;
- i. encourage the establishment of small scale workshops, trade and business in areas of acquired training/apprenticeship; and
- j. take advantage of the benefits of the socio-economic effect of reduction in the level of unemployment at all levels. (FGN, 2001 p. 13)

Government took responsibility for the upkeep of participants while in training and support beneficiaries with start-up capital loans in the Credit Delivery Programme (PGN, 2001).

To achieve these, over 2000 training centres for skill acquisition were mounted nationwide at the inception of NAPEP with selected entrepreneurial skills.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is a principal donor, rendering assistance in poverty reduction and human development in Nigeria. It equipped the capacity acquisition centres of NAPEP with necessary tools, machines and equipment to enable CAP function well. The UNDP supports the effort of the Nigerian government as it stresses that poverty goes beyond lack of minimal adequate income but the presence of a less than complete atmosphere for people to realize and exercise their full potentials as individuals, and as members of their community (Kankwenda, 2001).

Participants of CAP were placed on a monthly stipend of N3,500 while a training fee of N3,500 was earmarked for each trainer for the entire training period (FGN, 2001). However, it is important to note that apart from the first phase of beneficiaries, handled by the Federal Government itself, other beneficiaries, after the Federal Government handed over to States and Oyo State Government were not given financial backing.

It is obvious that the Nigerian government has put in place several poverty alleviation programmes to empower the

people economically. However, these have not yielded positive impact. The Federal Government has not been able to create jobs or control unemployment. The governments skill acquisitions centre, are inadequate for the population of unemployed youths and adults. The ones that are in place are poorly coordinated and monitored. The rate of job creation has been far less than the rate of growth. Although the Minister of Finance reported recently that the economy has improved, this has not impacted on the masses at all. It is against this background that this study sought to assess the National Poverty Eradication Capacity Acquisition Programme as it influenced women's socio-economic empowerment in Ibadan, Oyo State.

2. The Problem

As laudable as government intervention programmes may seem to be in terms of poverty alleviation particularly among women, these programmes do not seem to influence women socio-economically. Besides, where impacts are made, the level is too minimal to affect the economic growth of the country. This premise thus necessitated an assessment of the influence of National Poverty Eradication Capacity Acquisition Programme on women empowerment in Ibadan, Oyo State.

2.1 Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested

- i. There is no significant relationship between National Poverty Eradication Programme and women's economic empowerment
- ii. There is no significant relationship between National Poverty Eradication programme and women's social empowerment.

3. Methodology

The study is a descriptive survey type investigating the relationship between NAPEP programme and women's socio-economic empowerment. The 2008 women beneficiaries of capacity Acquisition Programme of NAPEP were chosen for the study. The choice of these set was because they had completed the training and this enable the researcher to measure the impact. The sampled women were 256 from the Ibadan North Local Government Area capacity acquisition centre. The ages of the participants range from 19 to 52. Out of the 256 participants 180 (70.3%) were married, 56 (21.9%) were not married 12 (4.7%) are single parents while 8 (3.1%) are widowed. 28% of the participants had the Senior Secondary School Education certificate 65% had the Basic Education while 2% are degree holders and 5% had no formal education. They are engaged in enterprises like street trading and the like. The duration of the NAPEP skill development programme was six months.

The study was delimited to Ibadan North Local Government Area Centre of Samonda Ibadan, Oyo State. As at the time of survey Samonda Centre was the only centre covering Ibadan North Local Government Area. This Local Government Area houses indigenous people of Ibadan and majority of the women in the area have a history of fending for their families even when married (that is, being bread winners) with the potential of giving them entrepreneurship training, this will serve as another opportunity or addition to the street trading that they are known for. Even the few graduates among them who are engaged in government jobs opined that their salary is too meagre of their responsibilities at home.

A twenty-eight item self developed and structured questionnaire tagged "NAPEP Women Empowerment Scale" with a reliability coefficient of 0.87 was used to elicit responses from respondents. Out of a total of 256 questionnaires administered to the respondents, 250 were adequate for data processing. The 250 questionnaires that were well filled and adequate for data processing formed the basis of data analysis for the study. The researcher believed that there might be some information that were not captured by the questionnaire and/or avoided by participants in writing. She thus, made use of the Focus Group Discussion session to complement the study.

4. Results and Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis 1 Table 1: There is no significant relationship between National Poverty Eradication Capacity Programme and women's economic empowerment.

Variable	Mean	Standard	N	R	P	Remark
NAPEP Programme	71.7240	14.1694				
Women's Economic Empowerment	36.0000	5.1226	250	.195	.002	Significant

Correlation is significant at level 0.01 Table 1 above shows that there was a negative significant relationship between NAPEP Capacity Acquisition Programme and women's economic empowerment ($r = -.195$ $N = 250$, $P < .01$). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. However, the findings above negate the principles of the Federal Government of Nigeria on National Poverty Eradication Programme. The National Policy on Women states that:

Nigeria affirm its support for the alleviation of the numerous constraints to women's full integration into its developmental process by seeking the full participation of women in the economic programme of the country by backing it up with resources. (National Policy on Women, 2000)

Naturally, entrepreneurial skills were acquired by women through NAPEP, However, after handing over to States, the later beneficiaries were not given financial backing. The refusal of the Federal and State Government to give financial support to beneficiaries contradicts the laid down principles of the programme. Financial support towards such programmes is very salient. This is supported by (Alajuronye, 1992; Ogbuagu, 2000; Mbacham, 2001; Olajide 2004; Bayode, 2005; Ogunwomoju, 2007 and Tengey, 2009)

Furthermore, the Focus Group session recorded thus:

We were not given money or loan at all, both during and after training. May be tomorrow has because, our name were compiled, our pictures and pictures of our shops were taken since 2007 but we have not heard anything since then. However, we were given equipments/ materials at graduation after paying a percentage of the cost. But those on computer training were not given at all. Only two were given to about 50 graduants in each centre. This can only be kept in centres. FGD participants Samonda Ibadan/September 25, 2008.

Again, the above run contrary to the policy thrust in which Nigerian Government is a signatory. For instance, the policy says:

Women shall be empowered, through appropriate educational and skill development programmes to utilize their great potentials for the economic progress of their country through their participation in the privatization of public enterprise in production for export and home consumption. (National Policy on Women, 2000)

Alese (2010) reiterated that, Oyo State was allocated 98,771,872 for Capacity Acquisition Programme, she went further to ask the question whether the money was disbursed to the direct beneficiaries of the programme or embezzled as the case was of all other previous programmes – and the reason NAPEP was inaugurated.

Participant of the FGD confirmed this:

e e, ati e gbo wipe won ni ki won fun wa lowo lasiko ekose ati igbati a ba pari ka e dokowo sugbon won tun ti koje, bi won tii se. FGD participants Samonda Ibadan/ August 12, 2008

Meaning:

We learnt that we were supposed to be given token allowances during training and after as start-up capital, but it has been embezzled as usual. FGD participants Samonda Ibadan/ August 12, 2008

This was further corroborated by literature

... issues around the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) have dominated the media mainly for the wrong reasons.... The government agency has been enmeshed in controversy over sundry allegations, ranging from corruption, incompetence to misinterpretation of the programme's vision. The issues had centred on mismanagement, especially, in the alleged diversion of N417 million of NAPEP fund as well as setting up of parrallel phoney companies to ape and appropriate the functions of the agency for the benefit of few corrupt officials.(Anonymous, 2010 p 1.) www.businessdayonline.com

Is this not a confirmation of Ihovbere's assertion? that:

We have always had a bureaucracy just as we have had dependence, underdevelopment, instability, corruption, waste, misplaced priorities and poverty. (Ihovbere, 2008 p. 6)

At this juncture it is pertinent to ask for the roles played by the monitoring and coordinating unit of NAPEP.

In 2009, an 11 man Senate committee reported abuses of office by NAPEP officials and lack of proper monitoring and evaluation despite the N1.8 billion allocated for such between 2006 and 2008. NAPEP officials also provided fake names and unverifiable addresses of beneficiaries in order to cover up (Anonymous, 2010).

NAPEP's mandate is to ensure strong winning partnerships in the nation to make for sustainable and successful programmes' implementation for the benefit of the poor and to assist State and Local governments to develop direct anti-poverty programmes including micro-credit and micro finance and the building of public and private sector partnerships that will empower the poor and disadvantaged (Anonymous, 2011). Has NAPEP not gone the way, previous poverty related programmes went?

It is also important to stress that there is no good collaboration effort between the donor agency (UNDP), the Federal, State and Local government, the community based organizations and the Civil Society organizations. NAPEP was intended to revolve round the target audience without ceasing until the goal and objective of eradication of absolute poverty are met. However, NAPEP is obviously going into extinction as its foot prints are rarely seen in States and Local Government Areas of the nation presently. As at the time of writing this paper the findings of the reports of the visitation panel and the senate committee on National Planning and poverty Eradication has not been reviewed and published. Will these be swept under the carpet as usual?

The presidency is headed by a man that is supposed to have zero tolerance for corruption given his level of education and training, does it mean that he is not aware of this:

Again, the donor agency has not lived to expectation. For instance, another centre that would have been captured during survey was at Ososami in Ibadan. All materials for skill acquisition were locked up in rooms. The Rotary club of Ososami houses the centre. The facilitators of the centre protested non payment of salaries for several months

Hypothesis 2, Table 2: There is no significant relationship between National Poverty Eradication Capacity Acquisition Programme and women's social empowerment

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	N	R	P	Remark
NAPEP Programme	71.7240	14.1694				
Women's Economic Empowerment	49.5680	10.0151	250	.267**	.000	Significant

It is shown in the table above that there was positive significant relationship between NAPEP Capacity Acquisition Programme and women's social empowerment ($r = 267^{**}$, $N = 250$, $P < .01$).

The findings confirmed roles played by the Federal Government of Nigeria through the international donor agency (UNDP) that recognized socio-economic roles of women in the family and the society at large and organized relevant training for women in which women also organize themselves into trade groups and cooperatives in order to boost production, sales and marketing of their wares. (UNDP, 2000 as quoted by Oladapo 2006). Aribisala also noted that in the process of enhancing social empowerment, women in Africa established women business association and this includes women small scale entrepreneurs.

The World Bank (2003) posits that empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people, to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives, women beneficiaries of NAPEP programme were thus positively empowered socially.

Again the findings were corroborated through the summary of the Focus Group Discussion for instance; the women had this to say:

Through capacity Acquisition Programme, we have come together to organize ourselves into business and cooperative units. We meet fortnightly to discuss issues affecting our trades, products/services. We have agreed that this is our 'parent' house organization. We have bigger associations, where we do yearly anniversaries, rejoice or mourn with each other, when the need arise. We dress in 'Aso ebi' (uniform) during celebration of members and graduation of our apprentices. FGD participants Samonda Ibadan/October 4, 2008

The above confirms Manuh's position on harnessing women's own energies through their association (Manuh, 1998).

Aribisala (2000) also posits that women have established business organizations including the National Association of Women in Business (NAWB) and the Nigerian Association of Women Industrialist (NAWI) and small scale entrepreneurs are members.

5. Recommendations

The study has enabled us to discover that target poverty alleviation programmes are capable of enhancing economic and social development among the people and women thereby, serving as empowerment strategies to the people. However, it is noteworthy that the desired effect will not be achieved without the necessary ingredients and will.

There is need to provide enough and durable equipments/materials to be used in centres during the acquisition of such programmes and at completion. All beneficiaries must receive equipments/materials as applicable.

The numbers of instructors in the centre need to be increased as the present ones are inadequate. They also need to be motivated. Most of them complained that they were not well paid. The ones that are owed should also be paid immediately.

Financial assistance which may be in the form of soft loan should be given to beneficiaries at the end of the programme to enable them start business.

All stakeholders – Government, the principal international donor (UNDP) Community Based organizations, the civil society the ministry, to provide adequate fund, monitor and coordinate the programme properly for effectiveness.

It is high time the government put in all seriousness into its programmes and remove all form of corruption. Corrupt officers who divert funds meant for public programmes should be brought to book and punished severely to serve as deterrents to others.

6. Conclusion

Poverty reduction programmes no doubt enhance and complement the socio-economic status of the individual thereby making positive impact on the society at large. However, poverty reduction programmes should be tailored towards achieving its goals and objectives through proper coordination of all stakeholders.

The issue of corruption and diversion of funds meant for such programmes should be taken more seriously otherwise target programmes will not be sustainable. If NAPEP wishes to deliver its mandate without failing the masses as previous programmes, an immediate review which will be published for all and sundry should be done with all transparency.

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