

**REENGINEERING POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES:
IMPLICATIONS ON ELIMINATION OF CONFLICTS AND CRIMINALITIES IN
NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

This review is undertaken to examine how reengineering of poverty alleviation programmes would reduced conflicts and criminalities. The review showed that the poverty alleviation measures implemented so far have focused more on growth, basic needs and rural development approaches. Most of the poverty alleviation strategies adopted in Nigeria were well focused on rural areas and agricultural sector. It was observed that most of these programmes before and during Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) were supply driven which could not meet the needs of the poor and so they had little effect in alleviating poverty. This paper recommended that reducing poverty goes along with other social services like providing quality compulsory education, improved health, and reducing inequality in the society. Therefore, Poverty Alleviation Programmes must include other social service to make the programme more effective.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Some think-tanks argue that conflict predates the creation of human beings, while others argue that conflicts and conflict manifestations are associated with the presence of people. The idea of conflict and conflict expressions is an essential component of the theories of human development, news items documenting the everyday experience of communities and civilizations, and popular cultures (Charles & Eversley, 2008). Conflict has always grabbed individuals and society's interest. It has both good and bad consequences like other kinds of social contact. Conflict ends and begins to serve human goals in society (Mondal, 2015).

On the surface, conflict and war are closely linked to the well-known problems of poverty, poor governance, corruption and weak nations. Conflict, armed violence and instability are destroying businesses, communities and families, connected to skewed political economics of violence in which predators are becoming enriched to the cost of the majority. Moreover, the circumstances of poverty and marginalisation are thought to lead to increased conflict risks.

An investigation into how conflicts may be eliminated or reduced and how peace and prosperity can be secured in Nigeria, as in any other nation, is thus a good development.

The eradication of conflicts may be accomplished by removing/taking away the known reasons or causes of conflict/insecurity such as poverty, poor governance, corruption, etc. This article will thus concentrate on Nigeria's involvement in the removal/reduction of conflicts/insecurity of poverty alleviation programmes. This is because, in Nigeria and other comparable third world nations, abject poverty has been severely emphasised as one of the main reasons of the war (Brussels, 1956). Conflict creates new standards and new organisations. In attempting to resolve conflicts, it creates or generates new standards and institutions, which include poverty alleviation programmes and initiatives. The elimination/reduction of conflicts is thus an element of conflict resolution procedures that need to be implemented. Therefore, investigating how conflict might be eliminated or reduced at least in Nigeria is extremely important to peace and stability, which provides an enabling atmosphere for more profitable and progressive social growth and development.

Conflict is believed to be as ancient as humanity and also a hallmark of human civilization. Men have to fight, even if they have no guns or instruments of violence are inaccessible; and as Morgenthau (2013) argues, men will fight with their bare fists if there are no weapons to fight (Folarin, 2015). There is conflict in all human civilizations and in all levels of society. This is because social interactions and relationships are prone to switch from one agreement to another, leading to discord, friction and hostility in certain instances. As such, conflict in human and organisational interactions is unavoidable and will naturally arise throughout time. This is why Darby (2016, p25) noted that: 'Conflict is neither good nor evil, but is inherent from marriage to international diplomacy in all social interactions.' The scholar also said that there are conflicts or conflicts every time two or more people meet; nevertheless, the main problem isn't conflict but how it is managed (2016, p25).

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2.0 CONCEPT OF POVERTY

A concisely and generally recognised definition of poverty is mainly difficult since it impacts various elements, physically and psychologically included. Consequently, many criteria have been employed to conceive poverty. The majority of analysts accept the traditional view of poverty as a consequence of inadequate money to secure essential goods and services, while those who regard income as the basis to identify who is poor and who is not poor see it as (Olowa, 2012; Yakubu, 2020).

Revallion and Bidani (2012) described poverty as a lack of control over fundamental food requirements; inadequate consumption; and insufficient food, clothes and shelter. The perspective of poverty is very limited since it considers poverty in material terms and uses categories based on consumption to describe the breadth and depth of poverty in order to find out who is and who is not poor. According to the definition, the poor are those persons or families that lack certain fundamental material resources that give value to existence in a specific community. Nutrition, shelter and water are the basics. This implies that if you have no such resources, you are deemed poor. The issue with this approach is that the causes of the insufficiency of the base good are not identified. It thus did not explain whether the government does not offer these resources or if people are incapable of using the possibilities that they have. It also overlooks the function that money plays in connection to their availability. These resources may thus be acquired with adequate money.

In Aliyu (1998) poverty is defined as a situation in which a person cannot comply with the minimal fundamental food, health, housing, education and clothing needs. He estimated that an adult in Nigeria would need the sum of N3.920 per month and that if the income of the family (total money available to household spend needed to provide feeding and other services) needed in the household is below a certain standard value, then the family is said to be in a state of poverty. The efforts to define poverty as above might be called an overview of the characteristics or characterisation of poverty.

For his side, Horowitz (2000:206) defines poverty as a concentration of unfavourable conditions that may adversely influence development. He views poverty as inequity, a kind of terrible situation that some people suffer from poverty, while others do not. This sad situation renders the impoverished unable to make a significant contribution to a nation's growth. According to him, these disadvantaged situations are best comprehended inside the DEV framework. He claimed that the people are poor because their access to the resources of a good life is either denied or excluded. To him, people are deprived because they have no access to empowerment. This is because, with the proper tools, individuals may enhance their capacity to maintain and grow their productivity and service production, thus avoiding severe deprivation. The definition tends to blame individuals in society for managing state resources, but not for distributing them equally amongst the masses, which leads to their poverty

(Horowitz, 2000, p.206). Thus, the concept focuses instead on the causes of poverty and its effects.

3.0 CAUSES OF POVERTY IN NIGERIA

Obadan (1997) identified some factors as the causes of poverty among which are; inadequate access to employment opportunities, inadequate physical assets, inadequate access to markets, destruction of natural resources, lack of power to participate in design of development programmes and inadequate access to assistance for those living at the margin. On the consequences of poverty, Aku et al (1997) opined that there is general loss of confidence in a society stricken by poverty and this renders government policies ineffective. Poverty also results in increasing the fragility and vulnerability of members of society to external influences. Furthermore, poverty makes production remain largely subsistence due to lack of capital needed for expansion. Labour becomes intensive and marginal productivity remains low.

There is no one cause or determinant of poverty. On the contrary, combination of several complex factors contributes to poverty. They include low or negative economic growth, inappropriate macroeconomic policies, deficiencies in the labour market resulting in limited job growth, low productivity and low wages in the informal sector, and a lag in human resource development. Other factors which have contributed to a decline in living standards and are structural causes or determinants of poverty include increase in crime and violence, environmental degradation, retrenchment of workers, a fall in the real value of safety nets, and changes in family structures (Ajakaiye and Adeyeye, 1999; Ogwumike, 2002 and NPC, 2004). These are examined below:

Low economic growth performance: Growth of the economy is a must for poverty reduction. In developing countries such as Nigeria growth that is employment generating and with export base is desirable in order to achieve growth that is poverty reducing with equity. Although the economic performance of countries in the World has generally been highly volatile since the early 1980s, on the whole, growth rates have been low or negative, with overall declines in several countries. This is due in part to external shocks such as adverse changes in several countries' terms of trade, changes in global demand for exports and changes in global interest rates on developing countries external debt.

Macroeconomic shocks and policy failure: This has been a major cause of poverty in several countries of the world. As many economies in the world faced macroeconomic disequilibrium, mostly in the balance of payments due to expansive aggregate demand policies, terms-of-trade shocks, and natural disasters, it become necessary to undertake major policy reforms. In the process such economies became vulnerable to poverty.

Labour markets deficiencies: The poor's most abundant resource is their labour, a virile labour market is important to reducing poverty and income inequality. In most countries of the world the majority of poor households participate in the labour market in one way or another,

and thus poverty is a problem of low wages (in the informal sector), low labour returns to rural self-employment activities, underemployment, and in some cases, protracted unemployment. These problems are affected in different ways by deficiencies in labour market. The majority of the labour force work as paid employees in the private informal sector, followed by employees in the public sector.

Migration: Migration rates do reduce poverty especially when the majority of individuals who migrate are skilled workers. On the other hand, individuals who emigrate vacate jobs in labour markets. Thus, migration drains on skills. It reduces the pace of economic growth and thus slows the process of overall job creation and affects the long-run development potential in a country.

Unemployment and underemployment: Employment is a key determinant of poverty. Gainful employment is important for individual to earn income and escape from “income” poverty. While generally in countries of the world the non poor suffer from transitional or involuntary unemployment, the poor are faced with problems of structural unemployment due to lack of skills or extremely low educational levels, medical problems, geographical isolation (which affects some of the rural poor in general and the urban poor due to marginalisation of persons living in high- crime neighbourhood) and in some countries, discrimination based on race or other attributes.

4.0 CONSEQUENCES OF POVERTY IN NIGERIAN SOCIETY

The world's poverty is more than half the world's population. Its consequences in a nation like Nigeria are significant. The consequences of poverty are linked to several factors; one outcome leads to another, followed by another. The impact of poverty: low living standards, poor childcare, child labour, high alcohol and drug addiction rates, poor housing and living conditions, poor analphabetism/non-education, poor health, serious sickness and mortality, crime, social tensions, disruptions, disturbance and more Kellogg (2018).

The combined risk factors are complex, intertwined, aggregated and played in a catastrophic synergistic way on a daily basis (Atzaba-Poria, Pike, & Deater-Deckard, 2004). In other words, another bad issue leads to a nearly infinite cascade of negative effects. A head injury, for example, may be a catastrophic occurrence for a poor kid. A youngster may have cognitive or emotional impairment, mental illness or depression, or have inadequate access to adequate health treatment, and may feel a negative or disgraceful impediment to the child's help. It is reasonable to infer that poverty and related risk factors affect children and their families' physical, social and emotional well-being (Klebanov and Brooks-Gunn, 2006; Sapolsky, 2005). Data from the Infant Health and Development programme show that 40% of children living in chronic poverty are weak in at least two areas (such as language and emotions) at 3 years of age (Switzerland et al., 2012).

From the viewpoint of Egwuatu (2002, p.6), poverty may be an obstacle to fair development, he stated that the aim of eradicating poverty can be attained by a deliberate integration of the poor into the country's development process. In Abubakar's own opinion (2002) the pervasive poverty is a sign of underdevelopment. In terms of petroleum exports and petroleum production, data from Nigeria, which placed remarkably 6 and 7 in 2001, are 194th in GDP per capita. Ironically, the most prominent characteristic of Nigeria's economy is poverty and unemployment instead of spectacular riches. Most industrialised nations do not have as much funding as Nigeria yet this country's leadership has not been able to use the resources that are plentiful to serve its citizens.

5.0 OVERVIEW OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Poverty alleviation or poverty reduction refers to a set of actions that are aimed at bringing economic and humanitarian people out of poverty. Measures such as the traditional economic advance and poverty of Henry George are those that grow or aim to create richness for the poor as an end to poverty forever. These may include: assistance from the government for health, education and infrastructure to develop human and physical capital. Reducing poverty also means improving the living circumstances of those who are currently impoverished. Support is crucial to improve living, especially in health and research such as the Green Revolution and pox eradication. Financial services such as mobile banking may be made technologically accessible to the poor, in particular savings.

Poverty alleviation can be viewed as either a way, measure or scheme designed by any given developing country or society to reduce the level or incidence of poverty obstacle to the bearable minimum level for the economy. However, poverty eradication has been argued to be something or issue that is non-feasible to attain (Ahmed, 2010). It is alleviation rather than eradication that is difficult but possible to attain. The concept of poverty alleviation is generally accepted as part of economic development process and similarly a primary development objective, meanwhile, the concept of poverty is viewed as multidimensional in nature (Ogunleye, 2010 cited in Abdussalam, 2013). According to Kwaghe (2006), poverty covers numerous spheres of lives of people ranging from economic, social, political, cultural, to psychological aspects. Poverty represents a specific minimum level of income needed to satisfy the basic physical needs of food, clothing and shelter in order to ensure continued survival (Todaro, 2000:170).

6.0 NEXUS BETWEEN POVERTY AND CONFLICTS, INSECURITIES AND CRIMINALITIES IN NIGERIA

The notion that poverty breeds insecurity has been a contentious issue within the academic arena. Some scholars believed there is a direct link between poverty and insecurity. Whereas, others argued that 'insecurity' is caused by other factors. Empirical evidence suggests that chronic poverty and inequality breed conflict, ill feelings and insecurity. However, large numbers of critics and academic prowess have been committed to disproving the notion that

poverty has a direct consequence on insecurity in the world (Pipes 1995). The protagonists which argued that poverty has no correlation with conflict, however, felt such factors such as ethnicity, political instability and resource control are important causes of insecurity (for instance, see Collier 2000 and Kanbur 2007) for additional details on these variables.

So what is the cause of insecurity in developing countries? Is it ethnicity, resource control agitation, religious intolerance or bad governance? The argument has been laid to rest by recent academic findings by economic and conflict experts. According to Kanbur there is causality from poverty to insecurity (Kanbur 2007). The deprivation theory of Ted Gurr emphasized on this hypothesis. The theory explains the reason why people dabble into violence. The psychological aspect of the theory is that "aggression is always a consequence of frustration" and at the same time "frustration always leads to some form of aggression" (Leeds 1978). The poor are led to violence owing to their relative deprivation and needs (Odumosu 1999). This scenario agrees significantly with the current security situation in Nigeria. The act of frustration, denial and lack of want have actuated several of the youths in Nigeria to take up arms against the state.

According to Awaka (2012) as cited by Akwara (2013) more than 80 percent of conflict-related deaths occurred in less economic advantage states. Conflict, violence and insurgency are caused by poverty and other factors that have been inimical to the development of any society (see Gurr 1970 and Burton 1997). Studies have shown that most of the security challenges facing Nigeria in the current democratic dispensation have their root causes in the high level of poverty and inequality in the country. Nigeria ranks third among countries in the world, having extremely poor people.

7.0 REENGINEERING POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA

Defining poverty is a herculean task because of the elusiveness and the controversy surrounding the concept. This problem arises out of the very nature, magnitude and causes of poverty which differ across regions and nations of the world. In this literature review, an attempt was made to expose us to the various views expressed by scholar in the effort at resolving the controversy surrounding the concept. The phenomenon called poverty has generated considerable interest among scholars all over the world in recent time. The very diversity of poverty across has made it difficult for a consensus on the concept. The problem is more because various attempt made at defining poverty ended up describing the concept. Poverty is a common sense word which is implicit to the user, thus leading to as many definitions as there are users. As OConnor, (1991) opined, poverty can be conceptualized as a condition in which an individual or household is unable to meet the basic needs of life considered as minimum requirements to sustain livelihood in the given society; is unable to meet social and economic obligations, lacks gainful employment, skills, assets and self esteem;

and has limited access to social and economic infrastructure such as education, health, portable water and sanitation; and consequently has limited chances of enhancing his/her capabilities.

Todaro, (1982) recognizes poverty in pure economic terms as the number of people living below an imaginary internationally specified minimum level of income, called the poverty line, which cuts across international boundaries. The view of Todaro and Smith (2003), approximate Oladunmi, (1999) opinion that poverty can be defined as a situation of insufficient income for securing basic necessities of life such as food, portable water, clothing and shelter. According to Haruna, (2002), poverty is more than lack of income. It is also insecurity and inequality, poor health and illiteracy. These are the various component of poverty which reflects in various viable attributes, multi-dimension and nature. In the opinion of CBN, (1999), attributes of poverty may be classified into structural, economic, social and cultural deprivation. These dimensions of poverty exhibit a vicious cycle and account for the recurring decimal of poverty.

As opined by Sachs, (2005), it is useful to distinguish between three degrees of poverty. Extreme poverty means that households cannot meet basic needs for survival. They are chronically hungry; unable to access healthcare, lack the amenities of safe drinking water and sanitation, cannot afford education for some or all of the children, and perhaps lacks rudimentary shelter and basic articles of clothing. He further expands that unlike moderate and relative poverty, extreme poverty occurs only in the developing world. Moderate poverty he defines as generally construed as a household income level below a given proportion of national income. The relatively poor, in high income countries, lack access to cultural goods, entertainment, and recreation and to quality healthcare, education and other prerequisites for upward social mobility. Thus, while an individual may have more than enough income to sustain life, if it is very low compared to the rest of the community, the individual may be viewed as being in poverty. As the society grows richer, so the income level defining poverty rises. One may see poverty from the angle of permanence and transience. This dimension differentiates poverty based on time duration on the one hand and distribution as to widespreadness or concentration on the other hand. In the opinion of Aliyu, (2003), several types of poverty may be distinguished depending on such factors as time or duration. If the poverty is widespread, the occurrence itself is of limited duration and distribution. If it involves relatively permanent insufficiency of means to secure basic needs, the condition may be so general as to describe the average level of life in the society or it may be concentrated in relatively large groups in an otherwise prosperous society.

In recognition of the dehumanizing nature of poverty and all the attendant social problems associated with it, many successive government has introduce one or more programme aimed at alleviating the scourge of poverty among the people of Nigeria. According to Okpoko and Ezeadichie, (2003), poverty alleviation refers to sustained improvements in the living conditions of a particular group of people. They posit that poverty alleviation as a concept is closely related to development, which they described as chance process characterized by increased productivity, equalization in the distribution of social products and

emergence of indigenous institutions whose relations with the outside world are characterized by equity rather than by dependence or subordination. alleviation can be referred to as sustained development. Since development is not seen as a cluster of benefits, which a needy country simply acquires, but as an indigenous process that should rely primarily on the strength and resources of the society concerned, (Thirlwall, 1999). The aim of any poverty alleviation of any government is to achieve lasting improvements in the quality of life and not just short-term improvement that disappear at the end of the project cycle. Poverty alleviation is therefore aimed at maintaining the natural resource base through a process that adapts properly to the natural environment by making appropriate improvement in the social values of the people, (Paul, 2007).

According to Ogundele, Akingbade and Akinlabi, (2012), the contribution of entrepreneurship training and education on poverty reduction through youth empowerment and social welfare service improvement will be much significant if entrepreneurship is encouraged at all the level in the state especially at local and community level. This position approximate Ohize and Muhammed, (2009), who opined that non government organization, can play a vital role in poverty alleviation. This is evident from the success story of project YES as the findings revealed that the scheme has contributed to the economic upliftment of the youths by providing them with vocational skill acquisition and counseling services aimed at reorienting their attitudes towards self and societal development.

Akpama, Esang, Asor and Osang, (2011), observed that acquisition of vocational skills lead to a significant reduction of poverty among young adults, and participant's age on skill acquisition programmes significantly influenced poverty reduction. Entrepreneurial studies are inter-disiplinary training that focuses on the tools needed to start a new business or vocation. Because Nigeria is fast becoming a predominantly youthful society with high rate of unemployment requires training the youth in entrepreneurship skills in technical vocational education and training to tackle the unemployment which has reached alarming proportions. Amadi and Abdullah, (2012), reported from their study that a greater percentage of the sampled youth reported high and moderate levels of their capacity building implying that the vocational skills development was a successful scheme. They however recommended that the constraints that impedes the success of the scheme be addressed by policy makers to make the outcome of the skills training more successful.

8.0 CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper is to achieve what is stated in the introduction by investigating the claim that the high level of poverty in Nigeria has been responsible for the insecurity and criminalities in the country since the coming of civilian government in 1999. From existing literature, poverty, inequality and unemployment constitute a threat to the security and conflicts of Nigeria. Unemployment leads to poverty, and poverty creates insecurity.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Global institutions and economic experts have advocated for there to be peace, tranquility and stability in the world, there is a need for poverty reduction. To tackle poverty and insecurity in Nigeria, three major policy interventions are pertinent: To begin with, good governance has been seen as an antidote to poverty and insecurity in Nigeria. According to Oluwarotimi (2012), good governance is the panacea of the security challenges bedeviling Nigeria. It is only good governance that can guarantee peace and security in the present day Nigeria. For instance, Oluwa (2010) noted that “good governance is the primary function of an efficient, visionary, transparent, trustworthy and credible leadership whose driving force is an improvement in the collective well-being of the citizens through well-conceived, effectively implemented economic policies and human development programmes.”
- 2 Reducing poverty goes along with other social services like providing quality compulsory education, improved health, and reducing inequality in the society. Therefore, Poverty Alleviation Programmes must include other social service to make the programme more effective.
- 3 There is need to review the policy which to some extent has suffered decremental adaptation. Many Poverty Alleviation Programmes, including NAPEP has failed to respond to modern realities; in other words, government should review the policy to set achievable priorities for the real poor which are the hub that breeds more criminalities.
- 4 Poverty cannot be reduced by only one agency or policy in a country where poverty rate/incidence is high; where poor people are more than 70% of the population; where crime rate, insecurity, and other forms of conflicts has also been on the increase; and where rural dweller constitutes bulk of the population in the country. There is need for other programmees from local council and state to compliment the efforts of other poverty alleviation programmes.
- 5 Workability of any poverty alleviation/reduction policy depends to a large extent on the effective implementation strategies, and it being handled in a way that corrupt acts and sharp practices can be reduced to its barest minimum. Hence, people from the target group should be incorporated into the implementation aspects, for them to be part and parcel of the programmes as the understand their immediate society more and know virtually all members of their community.

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