

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND RURAL POVERTY REDUCTION IN NIGERIA (AN ANALYSIS OF THE NATIONAL POVERTY ERADICATION PROGRAMME (NAPEP) IN ADO-ODO OTA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OGUN STATE)

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Abstract:

This study examines Policy Implementation and Rural Poverty Reduction in Nigeria (An Analysis of National Poverty Eradication Programme in Ado-Odo Ota Local Government Ogun State). This becomes imperative in view of the growing incidence of poverty and underdevelopment in the rural areas in Nigeria and government's inability to tackle the problem. The rural dwellers are facing many challenges such as ill-health, poor education, lack of basic infrastructure and opportunities, natural disasters and economic upheaval as well as crime and violence due to neglect and inconsistency in the poverty reduction policies and programmes over the years.

The study makes use of primary and secondary data. Questionnaires were administered and analyzed. The findings reveal that there have been constraints in policy implementation in Nigeria such as: unrealistic goal setting, corruption, lack of consideration of socio political environment and lack of participation of target beneficiary in policy decisions. NAPEP is constrained by these problems, which is why it could not make much impact in the rural areas.

The study therefore, recommends that government should show more sincerity and commitment to rural poverty reduction through effective policy implementation. This can be achieved if policies and programmes are made relevant to the rural people through their participation in the determination of their needs, bridging the gap between the intention and the actual implementation of policy and realistic goal setting. Attention should also be paid to checking corruption and ensuring transparency and accountability. This will reduce policies' failures and bring about the desired development in the rural areas in Nigeria.

Key Words: Policy, Implementation, Poverty, Eradication, Rural, Nigeria

Introduction

Poverty is a global phenomenon but the level of the problem in developing countries has reached alarming proportions. Globally, about 1.2 billion people are living in extreme poverty less than one dollar per day. Due to the high prevalence of poverty, reducing it has been of grave concern to many countries in the past few decades. Though, there have been a lot of improvements in the developed world, such cannot be said of developing ones especially in the Sub-Sahara Africa where poverty is prevalent due to many factors namely: poor governance and political instability, poor economic management, mismanagement of resources, poor programme implementation, corruption and lack of purposive leadership (Babatunde, Olorunsanya and Adejola, 2008).

The Nigerian situation has been described as a paradox. This is because the poverty level contradicts the country's immense wealth. Among other things, the country is enormously endowed with human, agricultural, petroleum, gas, and large untapped solid mineral resources. Rather than recording remarkable progress in socio-economic development, Nigeria retrogressed to become one of the 25 poorest countries in the world (Ekpe, 2011). The 2010 poverty index indicated that 60.9% Nigerians now live in absolute poverty (Baba-Ahmed, 2012). Most of these poor people reside in the rural areas.

Poverty is more pronounced among the rural dwellers in Nigeria because the people are backward and underdeveloped in terms of minimum human standard of living. In the rural areas, the roads are bad, women and children walking barefooted and trekking long distance to get water and firewood, pupils studying under trees, dilapidated and ill equipped health centres, poor education, lack of facilities and opportunities, natural disasters and economic upheaval as well as crime and violence. This is due to neglect and inconsistency in the poverty reduction policies and programmes of successive governments since 1960 in Nigeria (Aderonmu, 2010).

The need to find lasting solution to perennial problem of poverty in Nigeria culminated in the establishment of National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in 2001. In spite of huge resources devoted to NAPEP, deterioration in fiscal discipline, corruption and poor implementation which undermined past efforts still make poverty eradication in Nigeria a mirage.

It is, therefore, imperative to investigate the factors which may have impeded effective policy implementation and development of the rural areas over the years using NAPEP in Ado-Odo Ota rural communities, Ogun State, Nigeria as a representative. The research is predicated on two questions: (1) Does NAPEP have effect on rural poverty reduction in Nigeria? (2) Are there constraints of effective implementation of NAPEP in the rural areas in Nigeria?

Conceptual Clarifications

Policy implementation is the action side of the government. It provides the operational area of function in carrying out public policy declared by competent authority. Mbieli (2006) explains that, in the execution of public policy, the combination of human, material, machine and money are highly necessary. He argues further that the agencies involved in the implementation exercise are classified into two broad categories namely: the government and the non-governmental agencies. These agencies are responsible for providing the required goods and services and developing the people.

According to Maduabum (2008), policy implementation is critical to the success of any policy since it constitutes the epicenter of the policy process. It involves the identification of policy plans, programme, projects and activities; a clear definition of the distinct roles of implementation organizations or agencies; details of strategies and necessary linkages and coordinating mechanisms; as well as resources (human, financial, material, technology, information acquisition and utilization). Efficient and effective policy implementation would require inputs of sound managerial and administrative capabilities in terms of proper activity scheduling, resource mobilization and rationalization, network analysis, budgeting, supervision, problem-solving, decision making and cost/benefit analysis.

Randel (2010) adds that, performance standards must be set along with policy targets, guidelines, plans and time frame in order to avoid implementation gap. He describes implementation gap as the difference between well-stated and articulated policy objectives or expected outcomes and the actual outcome which is a consequence of inefficient or poor policy implementation.

However, the key activity in policy formulation and implementation process is goal setting. Sambo (2008) explains that policy makers in developing countries engage in the elaborate exercise of goal setting by creating structures for planning. As policy makers make a fetish of planning as basis for development but often create lag between the expectations and realization of policy makers in developing countries. Egonmwan (1991) notes that, the problem of implementation gap arises when policy emanates from government rather than from the target groups. By this, it means that planning is top-down, and by implication, the target beneficiaries are not allowed to contribute to the formulation of the policies that affect their lives.

Poverty has attracted so much attention to academic, analysts, governmental, non-governmental organizations and international agencies. Poverty is multidimensional; it includes various alienations and deprivations such as: lack of human capabilities, poor life expectancy, poor maternal health, illiteracy, poor nutritional levels, poor access to safe drinking water and perceptions of well-being (Anyanwu, 1997). However, Issues in Poverty now include: physiological and social deprivations, vulnerability, inequality, violation of basic human rights (World Bank Report, 1999), and the observable disadvantage in relation to the local community or the wider society or nation to which a deprived individual, family, household or group belongs (Zupi, 2007).

Poverty Trend in Nigeria

Despite the fact that Nigerian economy is paradoxically growing, the proportion of Nigerians living in poverty is increasing every year as shown in Table 1. The proportion of the population living below the poverty line increased significantly from 1980 to 2010.

TABLE 1: Prevalence of Poverty in Nigeria 1980-2010

TOTAL	1980	1985	1992	1996	2004	2010
	Percentage of poor people in total populace					
	28.1	46.3	42.7	65.6	54.4	69.0
SECTOR						
URBAN	17.2	37.8	37.5	58.2	43.2	61.8
RURAL	28.3	51.4	46.0	69.3	63.3	73.2

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria, 2012

The above poverty statistics shows a national relative poverty level of 69 percent for 2010. This indicates that the poverty situation in Nigeria has worsened. With 73 percent relative rural poverty compared with the urban relative poverty level of 61 percent shows that the incidence of poverty is even worse in the rural areas than the urban centres. The absolute poverty level in Nigeria for the same period is put at 60 percent. Absolute poverty for the rural poverty in the same period is 66 percent while the urban is 52 percent.

National Poverty Eradication Programme

As a result of worsening poverty situation in Nigeria, NAPEP was put in place in 2001 to eradicate absolute poverty in Nigeria. The programme was arranged into four schemes: First, the Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), which was concerned with providing unemployed youth opportunities in skills acquisition, employment and wealth generation. Second were the Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS) to ensure that the provision and development of infrastructural needs in the areas of transport, energy, water and communication, quality primary and special education, strengthening the economic power of farmers, providing primary health care especially in rural areas. The third was the Social Welfare Services Scheme (SOWESS) which aims at ensuring the provision of basic social services, quality primary and special education, strengthening the economic power of farmers and providing primary health care. The last was the Natural Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS). The vision of this scheme was to bring about a participatory and sustainable development of agricultural, mineral and water resources (Elumilade, Asaolu and Adenreti, 2006).

However, NAPEP was to completely wipe out poverty from Nigeria by the year 2010 (Bindir, 2002) but many years after the implementation of NAPEP the poverty situation in Nigeria worsened. The poverty level in Nigeria has increase from 54.4% absolute poverty in 2004 to 60.9% in 2010. Ugoh, et al, (2009) identify factors that have contributed to the failure of NAPEP which include: poor targeting mechanisms, failure to focus on the poor, programme inconsistency, Poor implementation and corruption.

Methodology

The study adopts survey design. The study population was 22 rural communities of Ado-Odo Ota Local Government Areas, Ogun State, Nigeria. Samples of 10 percent of the population were selected from each of the 22 villages of agrarian rural communities' type totaling 880 people. 10 percent was also selected from the Local Government Council secretariat staff and the staff of the NAPEP office at the Federal Secretariat, Ogun State respectively. The total sample size was 960. The 960 questionnaires were administered and 720 were retrieved and were used for the study. Stratified

sampling method was used. (The distributions of the questionnaire in the research locations are as stated in appendix. Note that the estimated population is as obtained from the village heads and the Community Development Associations of each village which was collaborated by the Department of Community Development in Ado-Odo Ota Local Government Council in Ota, Ogun State).

Data Analysis

Research question 1: What is the effect of policy implementation on rural poverty reduction in Nigeria?

Table 2: On whether Implementation of policies on poverty has impacted positively in the lives of Ado-Odo Ota rural people.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	408	56.7	56.7	56.7
Disagree	228	31.7	31.7	88.4
Agree	24	3.3	3.3	91.7
Strongly Agree	60	8.3	8.3	100.0
Total	720	100.0	100.0	

(Source: Field Survey, 2011).

The above data show that 88.4 percent disagreed while 11.6 percent agreed. It indicates that implementation of policies on poverty has not impacted positively in the lives of people in Ado-Odo Ota rural area.

On whether NAPEP carried out intervention Programmes such as: infrastructure like; roads, pipe borne water, and electricity including skill acquisitions in Ado-Odo Ota rural communities, the data show that 73.9 percent disagreed, 6.7 percent agreed while 19% percent is undecided. Based on this, the respondents disagreed that NAPEP's intervention Programmes have been provided in Ado-Odo Ota rural communities by NAPEP officials.

The above results have shown that NAPEP has no effect on rural poverty in Nigeria.

Research question 2: What are the constraints of effective implementation of NAPEP in the rural areas in Nigeria?

On whether the goal set by NAPEP has been realized in Ado-Odo Ota rural communities.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	312	43.3	43.3	43.3
Disagree	220	30.6	30.6	73.9
Undecided	140	19.4	19.4	93.3
Agree	48	6.7	6.67	100.0
Total	720	100.0	100.0	

(Source: Field Survey, 2011)

The above data showed that 73.9 percent disagreed, 6.7 percent agreed while 19 percent is undecided. Based on this, the goal set by NAPEP has not been realized.

On whether there have been no corruption and mismanagement of funds by NAPEP's officials. The data show that 91.7 percent disagreed, 5.0 percent agreed while 3.3 percent undecided.

Based on this, it indicates that there have been corruption and mismanagement of funds by NAPEP officials.

On whether NAPEP has been used for political patronage, the results show that 20.9 percent disagreed, 67.4 percent agreed while 11.6 percent undecided. Based on this, the respondents agreed that NAPEP has been used for political patronage.

On whether the socio-economic condition of Ado-Odo rural community was considered in NAPEP formulation and implementation, the data show that 76.1 percent disagreed, 15.0 percent agreed while 8.9 percent undecided. Based on this, the respondents disagreed that socio-economic condition of Ado-Odo rural community was considered in NAPEP's formulation and implementation.

On whether the Ado-Odo Ota rural communities were consulted in the formulation and the implementation of NAPEP, the data show that 81.6 percent disagreed, 8.3 percent agreed while 10 percent is undecided. Based on this, it shows that the representatives of the Ado-Odo Ota rural people were not consulted in the formulation and implementation of NAPEP

The results show that there have been constraints of effective implementation of NAPEP in rural areas in Nigeria.

Findings

The study reveals that implementation of NAPEP has not impacted positively in the lives of Ado-Odo Ota rural people. However, this study discovers that some programmes were actually carried out by NAPEP but most of them were carried out in the urban centres with the total neglect of the rural areas. The study further reveals that there are constraints of effective implementation of NAPEP in the rural communities in Nigeria. These constraints include: unrealistic goal setting, corruption, political patronage, lack of consideration of socio-political environment and lack of participation of rural communities in NAPEP.

Unrealistic goal setting - Public policy making begins with the setting of realizable goals. The setting of goals will give direction and focus to the government on the one hand and the policy implementers on the other. However, when the goals are unrealistic, the policy will eventually fail at implementation stage (**Ijaduola, 2008**). NAPEP's goals looked complicated and unrealistic from the beginning. Take for example. NAPEP was to completely wipe out absolute poverty from Nigeria in 2010. This could not be achieved as absolute poverty level in Nigeria rose to 60.9 percent in 2010.

However, Ugoh, et' al (2009) argue that apart from its renting tricycles to young Nigerians for transport business in the urban and sub-urban areas, there have not been serious and identifiable efforts at empowering the beneficiaries with enduring skills.

Corruption – The study indicates that there have been corruption and mismanagement of funds by NAPEP official. Ogboru and Abimiku (2012) explain that corruption which has been seen as a way of life in Nigeria is largely responsible for the persistent poverty situation. Corruption weakens the state and its ability to promote development and social justice.

Corruption and mismanagement of resources were obvious in the implementation of NAPEP There have been abuse of office by NAPEP officials: It was discovered that NAPEP officials used their influence to approve for themselves directly or through their cronies funds which they used with no intention to repay. It is established that cases of funds approved for certain beneficiaries were diverted to different beneficiaries, thus making it impossible for such funds to be recovered. (Adekoya, 2010).

Political Patronage - Lazarus (2010) explains that NAPEP funds were used for politicking as the monies were given out as succor to loyal party members with no plans for recovery. It was a clear case of politicized micro-financing. In fact, during the Key Informant Interview conducted at the local government council at Ota, the woman who is the Head of Communities Development Office of the local government council stated that the only one officer of NAPEP posted to the local government had left when the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) party took charge of the local government as against the People Democratic Party (PDP) government that was previously in power. This is a clear case of political patronage. It is also discovered that NAPEP was not rectified by the legislature it was an executive council arrangement to serve the ruling party. This has made it difficult for the legislature to carry out an oversight function on the programme (Lazarus, 2010).

Lack of Consideration of Socio-Political Environment – One of the constraints militating against policy making and implementation in Nigeria identified in this study is the lack of consideration of socio-political economic environment before policies are packaged for implementation. In Nigeria, policies are never repackaged to meet the need of the target beneficiary. Poverty programmes are not locally based (Ajulor, 2012). They are made and decided upon by experts in Abuja. They then sent to state and local governments to implement without looking at the peculiarity of the state and local government. (Hashim 2002) explains that poverty reduction programme established in Abuja is only replicated at the state level without considering the local condition that caused poverty. He argues further that every state has its own peculiar problems. He gave example that in Jigawa state where the people are interested on how to solve problem of educational disadvantage. This may not be the priority of Ekiti state that has already so many graduates and professors.

Lack of Participation of Rural Communities in NAPEP - The study reveals that Ado-Odo Ota rural communities were not involved in the decision making of NAPEP either at the level of policy formulation or implementation. Therefore, the level of participation by Ado-Odo Ota rural people in NAPEP has been very low if not at zero level. This confirmed that the rural populace which constitutes the majority of the Nigerian poor could not make input into the policy making and implementation that will affect their lives. It is not surprising as this confirmed the authoritarian, imposition and top-down nature of Nigerian policy making and implementation (Eze, 2003). However, Oshita (2008) explains that the problem of poor policy implementation in Nigeria is due to non involvement of the target beneficiary in the policy making and implementation. The public policy processes in Nigeria continued to be top-down in conception, design, formulation, implementation and evaluation. This undermined citizen participation as an essential part of the public policy development process.

Conclusion

This study has been able to establish that successive governments in Nigeria for too long have neglected rural communities. There is very little evidence to suggest that past policies of government made significant impact in terms of bringing about improved quality of life for the over 73 percent Nigerians living in the rural communities. Policy implementation fails in developing countries like Nigeria because the formulation of the policy in the first place does not produce the best alternative designed to suit socio-political reality of the people to which the policy is targeted. The target beneficiaries are not involved at the formulation stage in order for them to have an input in what affects their lives. As a result of this, there has been no sense of belonging and commitment by the rural communities towards government policies.

It should also be noted that policies are often forced on people and since the people are not consulted for their input into the policies, they in turn distance themselves from the government's genuine programme meant to improve their lives and can even go as far as sabotaging such programme. The non inclusion of the target beneficiary in the formulation and implementation of policy have serious Implication on policy failures in Nigeria.

It is unfortunate that a programme such as NAPEP that is meant to harmonize all poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria did not have the input from the target beneficiaries and there was no legislative approval. The Nigerian National Assembly has alleged that NAPEP is an executive arrangement meant to serve the interest of the ruling party alone. As a result of this it has been difficult to perform oversight function. It is very clear why there have been high level of corruption and mismanagement of funds in NAPEP and alleged political patronage. The change of policy making and implementation from the top-down command structure to more consultative and participatory approach will definitely improve the quality of policy implementation in Nigeria and enhance transparency and accountability. Effective, efficient and people oriented policy making and implementation will reduce poverty and make lives more meaningful to Nigerians especially the teeming poor population in the rural areas.

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Appendix: Distributions of Questionnaire in Research Locations

S/No.	Rural communities, Local Govt. Council & NAPEP's Officials.	Estimated Population	Sample	Number of questionnaires distributed	Number of questionnaires returned
1	Erintedo	350	35	35	31
2	Ishagatedo	400	40	40	34
3	Ilori	450	45	45	25
4	Ilasa	300	30	30	29
5	Osuke	500	50	50	34
6	Abule Imota	500	50	50	33
7	Ewutagbe	350	35	35	28
8	Igbo-Odo	400	40	40	27
9	Ejila- Awori	600	60	35	26
10	Ipatira	350	35	60	32
11	Ajibowo-Ota	400	40	40	27
12	Oke- Ore	300	30	30	26
13	Owode- Yewa	400	40	40	32
14	Olaoparun	400	40	40	33
15	Iloro- Ado-Odo	300	30	30	28
16	Idi- Ota	350	35	35	29
17	Aromokala	450	45	45	31
18	Ijomu	300	30	30	30
19	Ibiri	500	50	50	32
20	Ajagboju	350	35	35	33
21	Ejigbo	450	45	45	32
22	Ere	500	50	50	26
24	CDAs' Members	150	15	15	10
23	Local Govt. Council, Ota.	500	50	50	35
24	NAPEP's Officials at Federal Secretariat, Ogun State.	50	10	10	7
	Total	9,600	960	960	720

Source: Field Survey, May – September, 2011.