

The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in Poverty Alleviation and Community Development in Nigeria: A Case of Aisha Buhari Foundation

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to assess the contributions of Aisha Buhari Foundation in the alleviation of rural poverty in Nigeria. Population explosion was identified as one of the problems confronting poverty alleviation efforts in Nigeria. It goes without saying that uncontrolled population growth magnifies the problem of poverty and naturally, renders insignificant, poverty alleviation efforts. To check this menace, Nigerians, especially the rural folk should be enlightened on the imperative of birth control. The assistance of Aisha Buhari Foundation, other non-governmental organizations, institutions and government at all levels is needed in this regard. The rural folk need to be told that inasmuch as children are gifts from God, giving birth to as many children as God is willing to give one would merely compound the problem of poverty. Affordable family planning facilities should be provided for Nigerians especially the rural folk. Only when this is done can we hope to control the country's population which according to the UNDP, is projected to grow to 230 million, that is double that present figure by 20152 (a mere 15 years away). Education is a very useful weapon against poverty. Ironically, poverty is a major weapon against education. In other words, poverty limits the ability of individuals to acquire education. Due to escalating costs of education in the face of dwindling income, many children are withdrawn from school by their parents to indulge in street hawking and unskilled labour. This tendency no doubt helps to compound the problem of poverty. Poverty alleviation efforts in Nigeria will receive a boost if educational opportunities are expanded to benefit as many people as possible.

Keywords: *Non-Governmental Organization, Aisha Buhari Foundation, Poverty, Community Development.*

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Background to the Study

Most social research efforts are motivated by the desire to combat one negative phenomenon or another. Within the context of this proposed research, the negative social phenomenon in question is poverty, a problem that has assumed alarming dimensions in Nigeria. The problem with Nigeria is not lack of human and material resources; indeed, the country is one of the most naturally endowed countries in the world. The ambassador of Denmark, a highly developed Western European country with one of the highest living standards in the world was recently quoted as saying that Nigeria is far richer than this country. He was similarly reported to have said that the financial resources available in this country are enough to ensure a decent living standard for every Nigerian. The envoy's statements reflect global opinion on Nigeria. What then is our problem? The problem of poverty in the midst of plenty is primarily caused by the skewed nature of inadequate and poor income distribution in Nigeria. The system in this country enables the rich to get richer while the poor get poorer. How can we ensure that the disposable income in the hands of the poor, particularly the rural poor, is enhanced? Another problem that exacerbates poverty is misplacement of priorities on the part of successive governments of the country. Neglect of rural infrastructure only helps to compound the problem of poverty in Nigeria. Rural-Urban migration which has led to the loss of vibrant rural youths to cities would not have been as acute if priority had been given to rural infrastructure. Apart from the aforementioned, other problems such as limited access to credit facilities, high cost of farm inputs and inclement geography all combine to compound the problem for rural poverty in Nigeria. These problems shall be identified and solutions to them proffered in the findings. Hence, the scope of the study covers Aisha Buhari Foundation, a case of Yola South Local Government Area of Adamawa State

Conceptual Clarification

Non-Governmental Organizations

The diversity of NGOs strains any simple definition. They include many groups and institutions that are entirely or largely independent of government and that have primarily humanitarian or cooperative rather than commercial objectives. They are private agencies in industrial countries that support international development; indigenous groups organized regionally or nationally; and member-groups in villages. NGOs include charitable and religious associations that mobilize private funds for development, distribute food and family planning services and promote community organization. They also include independent cooperatives, community associations, water-user societies, women's groups and pastoral associations. Citizen Groups that raise awareness and influence policy are also NGOs.”

A Non-Governmental organization is a non-profit making, voluntary, service-oriented/development oriented organization, either for the benefit of members (a grassroots organization) or of other members of the population (an agency).

1. It is an organization of private individuals who believe in certain basic social principles and who structure their activities to bring about development to communities that they are servicing.
2. Social development organization assisting in empowerment of people.

3. An organization or group of people working independent of any external control with specific objectives and aims to fulfil tasks that are oriented to bring about desirable change in a given community or area or situation.
4. An organization not affiliated to political parties, generally engaged in working for aid, development and welfare of the community.
5. Organization committed to the root causes of the problems trying to better the quality of life especially for the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized in urban and rural areas.
6. Organizations established by and for the community without or with little intervention from the government; they are not only a charity organization, but work on socio-economic-cultural activities.
7. An organization that is flexible and democratic in its organization and attempts to serve the people without profit for itself. World Bank (1985).

Non-governmental organization (NGOs) is a group of people from different countries acting together, but not connected with the government of any country. Usually non-governmental organizations are non-profit - that is, they are trying to do something other than make money for the people who run them. They include organizations such as 'Oxfam' and 'World Vision'.

Non-governmental organization (NGO) is a term that has become widely accepted as referring to a legally constituted, non-governmental organization created by natural or legal persons with no participation or representation of any government. In the cases in which NGOs are funded totally or partially by governments, the NGO maintains its non-governmental status and excludes government representatives from membership in the organization

Government funding of NGOs is controversial, since, according David Rieff, writing in *The New Republic*, "the whole point of humanitarian intervention was precisely that NGOs and civil society had both a right and an obligation to respond with acts of aid and solidarity to people in need or being subjected to repression or want by the forces that controlled them, whatever the governments concerned might think about the matter." Unlike the term intergovernmental organization, "non-governmental organization" is a term in general use but is not a legal definition. In many jurisdictions these types of organization are defined as "civil society organizations" or referred to by other names.

Evolution of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

A striking upsurge is under way around the globe in organizing voluntary activity and the creation of private, nonprofit or non-governmental organizations. People are forming associations, foundations and similar institutions to deliver human services, promote grassroots economic development, prevent environmental degradation, protect civil rights and pursue a thousand other objectives formerly unattended or left by the state. The scope and scale of this phenomenon is immense.

Salamon (1994) argues that pressures to expand the voluntary sector seem to be coming from at least three over the counter antibiotics different sources: from "below" in the form of spontaneous grassroots energies; from the "outside" through the actions of various public and private institutions; and from "above" in the form of governmental policies.

The most basic force is that of ordinary people who decide to take matters into their own hands and organize to improve their conditions or seek basic rights.

There have been a variety of outside pressures: from the church, Western private voluntary organizations and official aid agencies. Emphasis has shifted from their traditional humanitarian relief to a new focus on "empowerment." Official aid agencies have supplemented and, to a considerable degree, subsidized these private initiatives. Since the mid-1960s, foreign assistance programs have placed increasing emphasis on involving the Third World poor in development activities. In the last one and a half decade, development actors have adopted "participatory development" as its strategy.

Finally, pressures to form nonprofit organizations have come from above, from official governmental policy circles. Most visibly, the conservative governments of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher made support for the voluntary sector a central part of their strategies to reduce government social spending. In the Third World order cialis online and former Soviet block such governmental pressures have also figured. From Thailand to the Philippines, governments have sponsored farmers cooperatives and other private organizations. Egyptian and Pakistani five-year plans have stressed the participation of nongovernmental organizations as a way to ensure popular participation in development.

Further, Salamon argues that four crises and two revolutionary changes have converged both to diminish the hold of the state and to open the way for the increase in organized voluntary action. The first of the impulses is the perceived crisis of the modern welfare state revealed after reducing of global economic growth in the 1970s. Accompanying this crisis has been a crisis of development since the oil shock of the 1970s and the recession of the 1980s, which dramatically changed the outlook for developing countries. One result has been a new-found interest in "assisted self-reliance" or "participatory development," an aid strategy that stresses the engagement of grassroots energies and enthusiasms through a variety of nongovernmental organizations.

A global environmental crisis has also stimulated greater private initiative. The continuing poverty of developing countries has led the poor to degrade their immediate surroundings in order to survive. Citizens have grown increasingly frustrated with government and eager to generic antibiotics organize their own initiatives. Finally, a fourth crisis, Solomon is referring to "that of socialism" - has also contributed to the rise of the third sector. It caused a search for new ways to satisfy unmet social and economic needs. While this search helped lead to the formation of market-oriented cooperative enterprises, it also stimulated extensive experimentation with a host of nongovernmental organizations offering services and vehicles for self-expression outside the reaches of an increasingly discredited state.

Beyond these four crises, two further developments also explain the recent surge of third-sector organizing. The first is the dramatic revolution in communication that took place during the 1970s and 1980s. The invention of widespread dissemination of the computer, fiber-optic cable, fax, television and satellites open even the world most remote areas to the expanded communication links required for mass organization and concerted actions.

The final factor critical to the growth of the third sector was the considerable global economic growth that occurred during the 1960s and early 1970s, and the bourgeois revolution that it brought with it. It helped to create in Latin America, Asia and Africa a sizable urban middle class whose leadership was critical to the emergence of private nongovernmental organizations. Thus if economic crisis ultimately provoked the middle class to action, this prior economic growth created the middle class that could organize the response.

The growth of NGOs operating in the Third World nowadays is enormous. Garilao approaches the causes of this growth by reasoning:

1. Societal conflict and tension.
2. The need to respond more effectively to crisis situations in the face of breakdown of traditional structures.
3. Ideological and value differences with the powers-that-be in the planning and implementation of development work.
4. The realization that neither government nor the private sector has the will, means or capacity to deal with all immediate and lingering social problems.

Different Types of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

NGO types can be understood by their orientation and level of cooperation.

NGO types by orientation:

a. Charitable Orientation often involves a top-down paternalistic effort with little participation by the "beneficiaries". It includes NGOs with activities directed toward meeting the needs of the poor -distribution of food, clothing or medicine; provision of housing, transport, schools etc. Such NGOs may also undertake relief activities during a natural or man-made disaster.

b. Service Orientation includes NGOs with activities such as the provision of health, family planning or education services in which the programme is designed by the NGO and people are expected to participate in its implementation and in receiving the service.

c. Participatory Orientation is characterized by self-help projects where local people are involved particularly in the implementation of a project by contributing cash, tools, land, materials, labour etc. In the classical community development project, participation begins with the need definition and continues into the planning and implementation stages. Cooperatives often have a participatory orientation.

d. Empowering Orientation is where the aim is to help poor people develop a clearer understanding of the social, political and economic factors affecting their lives, and to strengthen their awareness of their own potential power to control their lives. Sometimes,

these groups develop spontaneously around a problem or an issue, at other times outside workers from NGOs plays a facilitating role in their development. In any case, there is maximum involvement of the people with NGOs acting as facilitators.

NGO Types by level of operation:

a. Community-based Organizations (CBOs) arise out of people's own initiatives. These can include sports clubs, women's organizations, neighbourhood organizations, religious or educational organizations. There are a large variety of these, some supported by NGOs, national or international NGOs, or bilateral or international agencies, and others independent of outside help. Some are devoted to rising the consciousness of the urban poor or helping them to understand their rights in gaining access to needed services while others are involved in providing such services.

b. Citywide Organizations include organizations such as the Rotary or lion's Club, chambers of commerce and industry, coalitions of business, ethnic or educational groups and associations of community organizations. Some exist for other purposes, and become involved in helping the poor as one of many activities, while others are created for the specific purpose of helping the poor.

c. National NGOs include organizations such as the Red Cross, YMCAs/YWCAs, professional organizations etc. Some of these have state and cuty branches and assist local NGOs.

d. International NGOs range from secular agencies such as ReddaBarna and Save the Children organizations, OXFAM, CARE, Ford and Rockefeller Foundations to religiously motivated groups. Their activities vary from mainly funding local NGOs, institutions and projects, to implementing the projects themselves. Research survey (2020)

Roles of Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs)

Among the wide variety of roles that NGOs play, the following six can be identified as important, at the risk of generalization: UNDP (2000)

a. Development and Operation of Infrastructure:

Community-based organizations and cooperatives can acquire, subdivide and develop land, construct housing, provide infrastructure and operate and maintain infrastructure such as wells or public toilets and solid waste collection services. They can also develop building material supply centres and other community-based economic enterprises. In many cases, they will need technical assistance or advice from governmental agencies or higher-level NGOs.

b. Supporting Innovation, Demonstration and Pilot Projects:

NGO have the advantage of selecting particular places for innovative projects and specify in advance the length of time which they will be supporting the project - overcoming some of the shortcomings that governments face in this respect. NGOs can also be pilots for larger

government projects by virtue of their ability to act more quickly than the government bureaucracy.

c. Facilitating Communication:

NGOs use interpersonal methods of communication, and study the right entry points whereby they gain the trust of the community they seek to benefit. They would also have a good idea of the feasibility of the projects they take up. The significance of this role to the government is that NGOs can communicate to the policy-making levels of government, information about the lives, capabilities, attitudes and cultural characteristics of people at the local level.

NGOs can facilitate communication upward from people to the government and downward from the government to the people. Communication upward involves informing government about what local people are thinking, doing and feeling while communication downward involves informing local people about what the government is planning and doing. NGOs are also in a unique position to share information horizontally, networking between other organizations doing similar work.

d. Technical Assistance and Training:

Training institutions and NGOs can develop a technical assistance and training capacity and use this to assist both CBOs and governments.

e. Research, Monitoring and Evaluation:

Innovative activities need to be carefully documented and shared - effective participatory monitoring would permit the sharing of results with the people themselves as well as with the project staff.

f. Advocacy for and with the Poor:

In some cases, NGOs become spokespersons or ombudsmen for the poor and attempt to influence government policies and programmes on their behalf. This may be done through a variety of means ranging from demonstration and pilot projects to participation in public forums and the formulation of government policy and plans, to publicizing research results and case studies of the poor. Thus NGOs play roles from advocates for the poor to implementers of government programmes; from agitators and critics to partners and advisors; from sponsors of pilot projects to mediators.

Concept of Poverty

According to Gordon (2005), “deprivation can be conceptualized as a continuum which ranges from no deprivation though mild, moderate and severe deprivation to extreme deprivation”. He went on to list conditions which when two or more are absent, would indicate an absolute poverty threshold. Below are the seven (7) poverty indicators for those in the range of youths.

1. **Food** – there is absolute poverty if the youth has a body mass index of 18.5 or below, showing severe food deprivation (underweight)

2. **Water** – when available sources are limited to open sources such as wells, spring or surface what and it takes longer than a 30 minute round trip to access.
3. **Sanitation** - when there is no access to toilet facilities of any kind or those available are unimproved facilities such as pour flush latrines; covered pit latrines; and buckets.
4. **Health** – when a woman has no access to treatment for a serious ailment or a pregnant woman cannot receive antenatal care from a trained personnel who knows the modes of transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDs; or when a man does not receive treatment over a serious ailment or does not know the mode of transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDs
5. **Shelter** – when more than three persons have to live in a room, where the building has no flooring and is made of mud, and where the roof is made mostly of natural materials like thatch.
6. **Education** – where a person has not completed basic education and or is illiterate
7. **Information** – where there is no access to mass broadcast media at home for example, radio and television.

These indicators obviously do not include income and livelihoods, for livelihoods and incomes are seen in the context of 'overall poverty'. During the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, a standard indicator of poverty was the proportion of people living on less than one dollar a day, which was increased to 1.25 US Dollars a day. In Nigeria, with fluctuation in the value of the naira, this would be an average of 285 Naira a day.

Although official statistics from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) give the percentage of Nigerians living on less than 1.25 dollars a day in Nigeria as 61.2%, “using two smaller NBS household surveys conducted in 2010/11 and 2012/13, the World Bank reckoned that the poverty headcount in Nigeria (based on a US\$1.4 per day threshold) fell 35.2% in 2010-2011 to 33.1% in 2012-2013, compared with 61.2% calculate using questionable survey”. With the 2015 estimated population of Nigeria standing at 178,516,904 persons, 33.1% of population below poverty level would put the population of the extreme poor at about 59 million persons. This figure would certainly escalate with the downturn the economy has experienced in 2016 because of low oil earnings and government anti-corruption policies which have led to massive retrenchment in the banking sector; the resultant scarce access to foreign exchange has further worsened the low capacity utilization of industries, expanding the labour market.

Causes of Poverty in Nigeria

An individual could be poor because she/he has no means of income, which could be as a result of lack of appropriate skills or poor access to skills acquisition and credit. It could also be as a result of vulnerability, such as being physically challenged, and being elderly.

In a cultural milieu that discriminates against certain gender, poverty could be as a result of early (child) marriage, lack of education or lack of ability to have a say over one's life.

Humanitarian crises or conflict could also cause major shocks that displace people and cause major damages to their assets.

There are a number of reasons why poverty persists in Nigeria. These factors cannot be effectively exhausted. It is not the intension of this review to exhaust them either, but to point out those that are glaring and which there has been scholarly consensus about them. These include:

Macro-Economic Distortions: The Nigerian economy had experienced some changes since independence, but as at today, it is still characteristically dualistic and monolithic, depending on one primary product for exports and government revenue. The productive base is still narrow and weak. This is despite years of deliberate efforts at promoting economic growth and development through the preparation and implementation of development plans. At independence, the Nigerian economy was almost untimely based on agriculture, with the section contributing over 80 percent of employment, government revenue and exports (Nnebe 2006).

However, crude oil took over since the 1970s while agriculture is almost neglected. The major causes of Nigeria's economic problems are therefore easily discernible. They are rooted in the structure of the economy occasioned by inappropriate planning, wrong prioritization of policy programmes and inconsistent policy frame work for the productive section. These have heightened the scourge of poverty in Nigeria.

Effects of Globalization: The process of globalization which started almost two decades ago caught Nigeria in the throes of political instability. The main features of globalization process include liberalization of trade, free movement of capital and accelerated development in information technology. Globalization provides windows of opportunity if the indices of development (interest and exchange rates, terms of trade, tariffs etc) are on the positive and favorable scale.

In Nigeria, Gberevbie, Dunuji and Ogundeji (2009) maintained that by the middle of the 1980s, public infrastructure and utility had gone into serious dilapidation. The road networks were on bad shake. Schools and hospital deteriorated. Telecommunication and power supply became very erratic. A result of petroleum- related activities, agriculture was relegated to the background and those that remained in it were operating at subsistence level and characterized by:

- a. Collapsing and uncompetitive industrial sector activities
- b. Rapid growth in unemployment, underemployment and poverty;
- c. Hyper inflation
- d. unstable interest and exchange rates;

Given the Nigeria's political and socio-economic disposition, globalization presents more challenges to the country as it lacks what it takes to be relevant on even adapt on cope with it.

Bad Governance: Bad governance over the years had denied Nigerians of the ideals and dividends of democracy. Nigeria is yet to experience good governance, politics of government are still being formulated without due consideration to the welfare of the citizens, the outcome of which is further poverty (Igbuzor, 2005).

Corruption: Nigeria is ranked among the most corrupt countries in the world. The corrupt practices in Nigeria ranged from extortion by public functionaries to advanced fee fraud. At the national level, there is hardly any form of service that would be rendered without giving or receiving undue favours/quantification.

The manifestation of corruption in Nigeria progressed marginally among individuals and thereafter assumed an institutional and later national dimension. Currently, corruption is freely practiced at corporate/ institutional levels. In government, how much an institution or agency gets by way of allocation is determined not by its statutory functions but by patronage. Unfortunately, the agencies involved are central to the nation's economic activities that the harm they infliction the economy is ramifying. Foreigners find it difficult to invest in Nigeria because of the corrupt impediments put on their way. Case abounds of while elephant projects abandoned primarily because those executing were motivated by corruption rather than economic development of the nation. Through corrupt practices, the bulk of the nation's wealth have been distributed in favour of the few privileged to the detriment of the majority of Nigerians who are now walloping in abject poverty.

Debt Burden: Debt burden has been one of the draw backs to Nigeria's developmental efforts. The debt portfolio which was slightly above US 14.28 billion dollars in 1980 rose to about US \$32 billion in the year 2000. (Nnebe 2006). The servicing of the debt has encroached on the volume of resources needed on socio-economic development as it is estimated that about 40 percent of Nigeria's national incomes goes to debt payments. The high debt services ratio translate into resources constraint needed for such public infrastructure and utilities as: hospitals, schools, roads (urban and rural), power supply and portable water among others. Consequently, productive sectors of the economy like agriculture, industry, manufacturing among others are equally constrained leading to low productivity, low capacity utilization, under employment and low purchasing power thereby, throwing majority of Nigerians into abject poverty.

Unemployment: Unemployment in Nigeria assumed crises level in the late 80s and 90s especially among school leavers and graduates in tertiary institutions. A survey carried out by the Centre for Investment, Sustainable Development, Management and Environment (1998) gave the features as follows:

- i. Secondary school leavers between age of 13-25 years
- ii. Graduate unemployment which hitherto was unnoticed, started to emerge in mid 80s. The following influences the using graduate unemployment:
 - a. Nigeria had a total enrolment of about 600,000 students in 149 tertiary institutions in 1996/1997 academic year:
 - b. There were 123,000 graduates in the 1995/96 session and about 130,000 graduate in 1996/1997.
 - c. Cumulatively, Nigeria produced a total of 1,10,000 graduates from tertiary institutions.
 - d. About 10% (that is) 100,000 got formal jobs-over one million are openly unemployed or under-employed: This has given rise to high level of dependency thereby, leading to poverty.

Low Productivity: Productive capacity is low in the country. Industries that would have provided job employment for the people are either folding-up or producing at very low capacity; as a result unemployment is bound to increase, giving rise to poverty.

On the other hand, the World Bank's Poverty Task Force (2002) has identified the following as the main causes of poverty:

- i. Inadequate access to employment
- ii. Opportunities
- iii. inadequate physical assets, such as land and capital, and minimal access by the poor to credit even on a small scale;
- iv. Inadequate access to the means of supporting rural development in poor regions;
- v. inadequate access to markets where the poor can sell goods and services;
- vi. low endowment of human capital
- vii. Destruction of natural resources, leading to environmental degradation and reduced productivity
- viii. inadequate access to assistance for those living at the margin and those victimized by transitory poverty;
- ix. Lack of inclusive participation; which is the failure to include the poor in the process of designing development programs.

Long years of poverty in Nigeria have had adverse effect on the country. These effects according to Gbosi and Omoke (2004) include:

Illiteracy: The ability of many Nigerians to go to school has been cut short. This is due to the fact that many parents could not afford to pay their children or ward's school fees; provide their uniforms, books and other necessities required for education. Consequently, many Nigerians are without education or could not afford the heights they desire. The resulting impact is that illiteracy occasioned by poverty has bedridden many Nigerians.

Increase in Social Ills: The irony is that, Nigeria as a country is rich; while Nigerians are poor. In a bid to survive against all odds, the moral values and standards of the country has been ignored by many. Gbosi and Omoke posited that this moral decadence has launched the citizens of the country in such acts as prostitution, armed robbery, theft, ritual killing, kidnapping etc. These did not only affect the individuals members also, the country as a whole.

Increased Illnesses: The ability of the people to take good medical care of themselves is a function of how much they earn or have. Aliyo (2002) averred that the level of poverty in Nigeria has aggravated the health of many citizens. He argued further that many citizens contracts illnesses that are avoidable; while in some situations others dies of the sicknesses that are curable. In a country Nigeria where medical services are not provided for free, there is need for citizens to have sustained incomes. This is clearly lacking or outright absent. This coupled with untidy environments increased the level of diseases among Nigerians.

Hunger: One unfortunate outcome of poverty in Nigeria is hunger. Many Nigerians according to Nanaya (2002) cannot afford three square meals a day, besides others cannot afford even one on their own. This explains why there is ample street begging in many cities in Nigeria.

Poor Standard of Living: There is no gain saying that the high level of poverty has degraded many in Nigeria. This is evidenced in such indices like lack of access to portable water, poor shelter, unbalanced diet etc.

Reduced Investment: The citizens of a country are supposed to save if they must invest. Nanaya (2002) argued that the economy of Nigeria is poverty stricken hence only the few wealthy have the capacity to save, and therefore the opportunity to invest. On the other hand, the majority of the Nigerian citizens feed from hand to mouth let alone saving for investment. This has further extended the vast net of poverty in Nigeria.

Obstacles Confronting Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria

Nigeria as may be deduced from the preceding chapter has never fallen short of attempts at alleviating poverty. Regrettably, despite several attempts made by the government and non-government organization, to alleviate poverty, the scourge has been on the increase over the years.

These clearly suggest that poverty alleviation efforts in Nigeria have not borne the desired fruits. At this stage, it becomes germane to ask: What obstacles make it difficult for Nigeria's poverty alleviation efforts to achieve desired results? We shall attempt to identify these obstacles in the rest of this chapter. Nigeria's huge population ranks as one of the major obstacles accountable for the failure of past and present poverty alleviation efforts. At present our population is put at 120 million of this over 70% are classified as living in subject poverty. This means that over 84 million Nigerians can possibly be categorized as poor. Now, how do the government and existing NGOs adequately cater for such a huge number of people? Simply put, it is a virtually impossible task. Given our huge population and the high percentage of the poor among us, whatever has been done so far to alleviate poverty amounts to a drop in the ocean. Some analysis have put Nigeria's unemployment figure at 50%³. Given that more than half of the country's populations are within the active age bracket, this implies that millions of Nigeria's are unemployed. As at the time of writing this project, I don't have the exact number of unemployed Nigerians (such figures are difficult to obtain anyway). However, it would not be an exaggeration to State that there are more than 20 million unemployed Nigerians. Even this estimate is conservative. Now, how does one provide employment generation for all these people knowing that employment forms the bedrock of any serious poverty alleviation effort? This dilemma would help to explain why the government at all levels in Nigeria appears overwhelmed by the sheer size of the unemployed population. For example, Mr. Fidelis Osamor Public Relations Officer, federal Civil Service Commission States that recently, about 90,000 employment forms were given out to some unemployed Nigerian graduates at the Abuja headquarters and state branches of the commission. He adds that the commission had to adopt stringent criteria for collection of forms to peg the number at 90,000 considering the scale of the unemployment problem 90,000 is just a tip of the iceberg. Even at that the Federal Government only recently declared just 2016 vacancies in the civil service.

As happens in most human endeavours where inadequate financial resources constitute a formidable obstacle to poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria. For example the Federal Government voted the sum of N10 billion for the now defunct Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP). That might sound like a hefty sum but it pales into insignificance when measured against the size of the problem. Shared among Nigeria's 774 local government and 120 million people, the amount would not make a dent. Under the PAP employment scheme, each beneficiary was paid a monthly stipend of N3, 500 an amount TIwcmct5 rightly describes as laughable in the face of today's reality where minimum wage hovers between N5, 500 and N7, 500. Similarly, the sheer size of Nigeria's land mass (about 1 million square kilometers) combines with the country's huge population raises the cost of poverty alleviation. For example, Mr. Hashi Ashami, Food and Agricultural Organisation (FOA) Resident Representative in Nigeria says the country requires the sum of \$5.4 billion for the primary agricultural sector. Mr. Ashami adds that another \$5.4 billion would be needed for other supporting investment between 1998 and 2010 while the sums of \$1.5 billion would be needed for the livestock and crop sectors. This brings the total amount to about \$13 billion (Thirteen billion American Dollars). Considering Nigeria's current economic predicament, this amount is mind numbing. These figures illustrate just how difficult, the task facing our agricultural sectors is. These difficulties undoubtedly affect, poverty alleviation efforts for there is an inseparable nexus between agriculture and poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

Most NGOs that operate in Nigeria are also hampered by lack of finance. In view of this, these NGOs and other poverty alleviation organizations have to streamline their operations the implications being that very few people and communities actually feel the impact of poverty alleviation programme. Again, small scale entrepreneurs and co-operative societies find it difficult to obtain loans for their transactions. This is so because banks and other financial institutions charge exorbitant interest rates for their loans. The situation is even worse in the rural areas where there are relatively fewer banks and financial institutions. In the face of this handicap, the rural folk have to depend on the miserly amount they could raise on their own to start their businesses. Naturally, the profits made from such ventures are nothing to write home about. For example, Aderinto (1998) states that some women in Ajaara village, Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State each make as little as N50 per day from their business transaction. The problem of poverty in Nigeria is also compounded by the shortage and bad state of infrastructure in Nigeria, a problem that is much more acute in the rural area. Due to the poor state of roads in the rural areas, the rural folk find it difficult to evacuate their farm produce from the farms to their homes and markets. Moreover, the few available vehicles in the rural areas charge exorbitant fares for the evacuation of farm produce forcing many farmers to opt for human porterage, a very tiresome option. Similarly, electricity is scarce in the rural areas and when they exist are epileptic. This hampers commercial and industrial activities in the rural areas in particular and Nigeria in general. Other vital facilities such as pipe borne water and food processing and preservation facilities are in short supply in the rural areas. This makes it extremely difficult for the rural folk to process and preserve their farm produce. Most of them opt for manual processing of their produce. This option apart from limiting output is very tedious and makes rural farming even less attractive. Closely related to the above is the problem of rural-urban migration. The shortage of vital infrastructure in the

rural areas coupled with low level of industrialization force the Youth who constitute the energetic segment of the population to flee rural areas. This development sees to it that agricultural activities in the rural areas are left at the hands of old and tired people. This factor no doubt constitutes a serious impediment to poverty alleviation effort in the rural areas and by extension, the entire country. UNDP (2009).

Corruption and Politics constitute another serious obstacle to poverty alleviation efforts in Nigeria. For example, it has been alleged that the defunct Poverty Alleviation Programmed (PAP) was used by the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) to settle political allies. Today, the N10 billion initially budgeted for PAP cannot be fully accounted for. There have been allegations that PAP jobs were used to settle political thugs. Similarly, some critics allege that some people were given PAP stipends for doing nothing. These people can be described as ghost PAP beneficiaries. New swatch reports that in Osun State, some praise singers of the Ooni of Ife were paid the monthly PAP stipend of N3, 500 just for praising the monarch to compound the problem of the genuinely poor, the politicians who have hijacked the PAP committees in the various states of the federation are said to be extorting between N100 and N200 from thousands of prospective job seekers before issuing them registration forms. Some JA & J have also emerged to dupe desperate job seekers of their money. For example, in Ibadan a phantom poverty alleviation organization known as —Operation Farewell to Poverty has connived with some churches to dupe the poor who are asked to obtain registration forms for as much as N500 each for loans that never came. These actions rather than help alleviate poverty actually worsen the plight of the poor and weaken people's confidence in genuine poverty alleviation efforts. Research survey (2020).

Inconsistency in government policies has not helped poverty alleviation efforts in Nigeria. For example, successive governments in the country have each come up with its poverty alleviation scheme. Every new government quickly, Jettisons the poverty alleviation programme of the governments before it. Between Obasanjo's first coming and now we have had countless Poverty alleviation programmes and institutions some of which include, Operation Feed the Nation, The Green Revolution, Better Life For Rural Women, DFRRRI, People's Bank, Community Bank, Family Support Programme, Poverty Alleviation Programme and now, Youth Employment Scheme. The frequency with which existing poverty alleviation programmes are discarded for new ones suggests lack of continuity, which does not argue well for poverty alleviation efforts. Environmental degradation and natural disasters combine to undermine poverty alleviation efforts in the affected rural areas, for example, Aworawo (2000) argues that environmental pollution is largely responsible for the perennial poverty in the rural areas of Nigeria's Niger Delta. The establishment of industries and commencement of oil exploration in the 1950s signaled the commencement of extensive environmental pollution which has undermined the rural economy of that part of the country. The degradation suffered by the land and water resources of rural Niger delta badly affects the region's economy 65% of which is based on farming and fishing.

Similarly, many parts of the country especially the Eastern Region suffer serious soil erosion and landslide. This development renders the affected communities homeless and eats away much of the land needed for farming. The jobs of poverty alleviation in these affected areas

are therefore made doubly difficult. For example, land has to be reclaimed before farming could take place. Most poverty alleviation organizations simply do not have the financial resources with which to embark on land reclamation before farming could take commended in the affected communities. The government on her part seems overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the problem.

In the Northern part of the country, the situation is not any better. Drought and desert encroachment have robbed Northern Nigerian villages of thousands of hectares of farmland. The problem is also compounded by frequent locust invasions from the country's Northern neighbours. These locusts eat up untold quantities of crops to the frustration of farmers. These disasters no doubt double the task of the government at all levels as well as poverty alleviation agencies in the battle against poverty. Illiteracy is another factor that undermines poverty alleviation efforts in Nigeria. It is a known fact that fertilizers and other farm input are hard to come by in the rural areas. Even when they are available, their prices put them far beyond the reach of the average rural farmer. The irony is that even when these inputs are available, the mainly illiterate rural farmers find it difficult to apply them. The consequence of this is that most rural farming sticks to the same methods of farming used by their ancestors many centuries earlier. This limits farm output and further compounds the problem of poverty in the rural areas. As stated in the preceding chapter, use of old and manual farm inputs makes farming more tedious, time consuming and less attractive. Suffice it to say that poverty alleviation organizations find it difficult to pass modern farming methods to the relatively conservative rural communities of Nigeria. It is obvious that no genuine human development can take place in the absence of peace and security. This explains why the recurrent incidence of ethnic and religious clashes in the country constitute a serious obstacle to poverty alleviation. For example, Segun Ojo reports that ethnic clashes in Lagos have scared many Hausas from bringing in maize from the North⁹, a development that has had serious negative effects on poultry output. Due to the ensuing scarcity, the price of maize rose from N15000 to N19,000 per ton even in the rural parts of Oyo and Osun States. Poultry farmers in Lagos and other Western States are currently groaning under the weight of high cost of maize, a vital input for their trade.

Finally, there are cultural and religious obstacles to poverty alleviation. In the Northern part of Nigeria married women are put under religious seclusion known as *Purdah*. Women in *Purdah* do not go out of their houses without their husband's permission. This limits their ability to actively participate in economic activities that would help alleviate their poverty. Similarly, many rural folk believe that Christianity and Islam are against family planning. It is their opinion that one should have as many children as God gives one. Similarly, due to the preference for male children, most rural dwellers keep on having children until they get male issues. These factors no doubt compound the problem of rural poverty and make the job of poverty alleviation more difficult for as earlier stated; population explosion magnifies the problem of poverty.

Concept of Community Development

The United Nations defines community development as "a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems."^[1] It is a broad term given to the practices of civic leaders, activists, involved citizens and professionals to improve various aspects of communities, typically aiming to build stronger and more resilient local communities.

Community development is also understood as a professional discipline, and is defined by the International Association for Community Development (www.iacdglobal.org), the global network of community development practitioners and scholars, as "a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice, through the organisation, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings".

Community development seeks to empower individuals and groups of people with the skills they need to effect change within their communities. These skills are often created through the formation of social groups working for a common agenda. Community developers must understand both how to work with individuals and how to affect communities' positions within the context of larger social institutions.

To Rose (1996) community development is the "the utilization under one single programme of approaches and techniques which rely upon local communities as units of action which, attempt to combine outside assistance with organized local self determination and effort, and which correspondingly seek to stimulate local initiative and leadership as the primary instrument of change". This definition, as others emphasized the importance of participation by the people of a community in improving their conditions and physical environment.

Hillman presented a comprehensive but yet an inadequate definition of community development and argued that it is "a method of helping local community to become more aware of their needs, to assess their resources more realistically; to organize themselves and their resources in such a way as to satisfy some of their needs and in so doing, acquire the attitudes, experiences and cooperative skills for repeating this process again and gain on their own initiative". By this definition, community development is a process in the sense that it is a dynamic sequence which when set in motion, supplies its own powers so that people in the community through their own efforts are enable to move steadily towards the goal of self improvement.

In his view Baker opined that "community development is an educational process. It is not better roads, better bridges, pure water no better sanitation. It is something of the spirit more than something of material. It must reach into deep, cultural patterns of people, examining them and testing them as principles of faith: it is not temporary physical construction. It is the building within the heart and mind of men not recreation centre in the middle of field.

The point made in this definition is that community development is much more than construction of physical things. It must be a way of life of a community embraced by every member of that community, with that, all physical solutions to problems shall follow and in their proper order. Community development as a process of social action in which people of a community organize themselves for identification of their needs, for planning, and for action to meet those needs with maximum reliance on their own initiative and resources, supplemented with assistance from government and non-governmental organizations.

Goals of Community Development

The community is made up of individuals and households who must be concerned with the purpose of self-fulfillment and the development of human beings, the environment and resources. It is the community that we live that, most of us will find love, peace, happiness and useful purpose in life. It is in the community that we can serve others and win their attention. It is place where comprehensive type of medical care, education and other socio-economic services can be provided by the people themselves or in collaboration with governmental and non-governmental institutions.

The community is where all of us can take active part in the improvement of our social organizations in actualizing ourselves in terms of interest and love for our fellow human beings and the physical environment. Consequently, the goals of community development according to Okoye (1987) can include the following:

- i. To improve life at the local community level as fast as our human and material resources can carry us;
- ii. To develop all aspects of community living simultaneously so as to avoid imbalance or neglect of any area of living;
- iii. To explore and use technical assistance available from outside the community;
- iv. To demonstrate special capabilities, projects and resources which will be useful to other communities;
- v. To cooperate with and coordinate state and national development plan.

In Nigeria and other developing countries, community development has emerged as an instrument by which government could relate itself to people in a positive fashion and create a channel of community between the people and government. It demonstrates a capacity to reach the people more rapidly than otherwise. It offers people hope and the beginning of social justice. It is a way by which government can show that it is concerned and interested in peoples' aspirations, their problems and their efforts. It demonstrates that they have a role to play in shaping or determining their own future or destiny, the future of their children and of the nation as a whole.

It is a way of showing that progress can only come about through the people themselves. The final goal of community development is to demonstrate that the people should be the one to take initiatives and decisions to take action. They should participate in planning and not merely in execution.

Problems of Community Development in Nigeria

There exist multiple problems that have over the years posed great threat to community development in Nigeria. These constraints are expressed as follows:

Misplacement of Priorities: In most cases, the actual programmes and priority attention projects are misplaced to other alternatives that are not programmatically feasible for a given community. This is mostly because such programmes or projects are instituted by out consultation to the communities concerned.

Lack of adequate financial and material resources: It is quite unfortunate that with abundance wealth of our national, most communities still wallow in serious poverty such that, they cannot afford to carry out projects that are of transformational effects on their living conditions on the account of inadequate finance. This has therefore reduced the pace of community development especially those in the rural areas.

Inadequate technical know-how: This is another serious threat to community development in Nigeria. This ugly situation stems from the fact that qualified technical officials or engineers are mostly concentrated in urban areas where they enjoy the services of social amenities. This is always to the detriment of the rural communities. The most striking part is that such experts are really in short supply

Corruption: Like any other area of our national life, community development is one of the worse hit by corruption. Instances abound where community projects are abundant half-way or left unattended to, after large sums of money budgeted for them have been collected by the contractors. In some instances, such contractors connive with some fraudulent community stakeholders and disappear in the thin air with impunity. This trend has jeopardized efforts at community development.

Aisha Buhari Foundation

Aisha Buhari Foundation was founded in June 2015. The foundation aims to alleviate poverty in Nigeria by encouraging community - based development efforts. Aisha Buhari Foundation has its administrative office in Abuja and operations office in Yola, Adamawa State. Its mission is to challenge poverty, ignorance and social injustice in Nigeria. Since its inception three years ago Aisha Buhari Foundation has executed a number of programmes aimed at uplifting the living conditions of the poor. The Aisha Buhari Foundation seeks partnership with grassroots development organization which engages in self-help ventures. The foundation helps these communities - based organizations to obtain funds by linking them with financial institutions for loan. The foundation also directly makes grants to grassroots development organizations. As at September, 2016, the foundation had approved 141 loans valued at N73 million to 82 Micro credit and Micro enterprise groups in twenty two states of the country. Similarly, over 154 people from about 64 organizations have benefited from the foundation's training programme. These training programmes are largely aimed at imparting in beneficiaries self reliance and spirit of entrepreneurship. These efforts are no doubt aimed at alleviating poverty among Nigeria through community-based approaches. Research and

Publications also constitute part of the foundation's poverty alleviation efforts. As at today Aisha Buhari Foundation has produced the following research works. i. An Update on the Credit Activities of Rural Financial Intermediaries in Nigeria. ii. The Mobile Bankers as Sources of External Financing iii. Survey of Commercial Banks on Loan Guarantee Schemes. In the long run the foundation hopes to enhance her poverty alleviation efforts by focusing on individual families. Over the next five years the foundation hopes to, in conjunction with relevant public and private institutions assist 100,000 families with projects aimed at poverty alleviation and economic empowerment.

As at today some 300 rural communities spread across the country at a minimum of eight communities per state have benefited from Aisha Buhari Foundation project know as Feature Assured. Through these projects the Aisha Buhari Foundation provides safe drinking water, and sanitation, and supports income generating activities with loans and capacity building for local entrepreneurs. The Aisha Buhari Foundation also provides skill development centres and micro credit for the poor in each state of the federation. Similarly, the Aisha Buhari Foundation has executed many other projects all over the country. For example, in 2017 the foundation intervened in the poverty-ravaged Nangawu Village, Bosso Local Government Area of Niger State. Before Aisha Buhari Foundation intervention, this community had no school, no electricity, no pipe borne water and no clinic. The Aisha Buhari Foundation sunk boreholes and with the involvement of local governments, supplied drugs to the community. A mini clinic was also built for the village. In further pursuit of its poverty alleviation efforts, the foundation donated cassava processing machines to selected rural communities in Nigeria. In October 2017, the foundation also spent the sum of N25m (Twenty five million Naira) to assist some poverty- stricken rural communities in Benue and Taraba States. The criteria for selecting these communities for assistance include lack of potable water, inadequate health facilities, absence of toilet facilities, lack of economic activities and high illiteracy level. In each of these community's farmer were given the sum of N3 million for four programmes namely sustainable agriculture, rural development and job creation. Inhabitants of Yola South were given free agricultural education and today the community owns sixty fish ponds. Similarly, Aisha Buhari Foundation has provided a bore-hole, ventilated and improved pit toilets, Cassava processing facilities and micro-credit facilities for Mubi, a rural community in Adamawa State. These projects were commissioned between October 17 and 24, 2017 during the celebration of Aisha Buhari Foundation Poverty Alleviation Week.

Finally, one would state that Aisha Buhari Foundation Poverty alleviation efforts in Nigeria are so numerous that would take a whole book to document all of them. Suffice it to say that the foundation and other non-governmental organizations have contributed in no small ways to poverty alleviation in Nigeria. In the course of this research, recommendations shall be made on how to encourage greater participation of these organizations in poverty alleviation efforts in Nigeria

Conclusion

The problem of poverty in Nigeria is compounded by the unacceptably low value of the Naira in the world currency market. The massive devaluation of the Naira has rendered the currency

almost worthless. The low value of the Naira leads to high cost of imported industrial input which leads to capacity underutilization and high cost of locally manufactured goods which in turn leads to low demand on the part of the poor masses, which leads to huge unsold inventories and depression in the industrial sector which limits their ability to expand and employ more workers, a situation that leads to unemployment. It is a vicious cycle. The Federal government should encourage exports and discourage the importation of all but necessary items. This would help shore up the value of the Naira and enhance the purchasing power of the average Nigerian.

One maddening irony about poverty alleviation in Nigeria is that it is people who do not need poverty alleviation that are charged with that task. It seems that poverty alleviation programmes actually end up making the rich richer and poor poorer. In other words, the poor have been marginalized in the implementation of policies ostensibly meant for them. The best way to ensure that the poor are directly involve in poverty alleviation programme, is by making the programme community-based. Apart from making the poor involved, community based poverty alleviation programme would help to check corruption because in Nigeria's rural communities virtually everybody knows everybody. If a person embezzles money meant for poverty alleviation the entire community could apprehend him. Similarly by invoking the wrath of the village gods against theft of poverty alleviation funds, rural communities would help to deter corrupt practices and ensure that funds allocated poverty alleviation are used for the purpose intended. The Federal, State and Local governments in Nigeria need to do something about the current upsurge in violent crime and ethnic and religious militancy. No meaningful economic developments can take place in atmosphere of insecurity. Similarly, by reducing violent crime and religious and ethnic militancy, the Federal Government would have sent positive signals to foreign investors whose investment would do Nigeria a lot of good, especially by providing employment opportunities.

Recommendations

i. It could be seen that over politicization of poverty alleviation programmes undermines efficiency. To this end, one would recommend that government at all levels should be less partisan in executing poverty alleviation programmes.

ii. There should be a distinction between the government and the ruling party. Once a leader is elected, he becomes a servant of not only his own party but of his entire constituency. In essence, poverty alleviation programme should be spread to accommodate all the poor irrespective of party affiliations.

iii. Similarly, poverty alleviation programme should be decentralized. Olurode (2000) argues that local governments are sidetracked by the Federal Government in the execution of poverty alleviation programme. This practice is not good enough. Granted that poverty is a national problem in Nigeria, the fact is that poverty alleviation programme should take into account local peculiarities. For example, poverty alleviation facilities provided for riverine communities in Lagos, Delta, Rivers and Cross Rivers may not be relevant to drought stricken communities in Northern Nigeria. Delegating some aspects of poverty alleviation programme to state and local governments would help to accommodate local peculiarities and ensure greater results.

iv. The Governments should assist NGOs resident in Nigeria. This it can do by providing enabling environment for NGOs and other poverty alleviation agencies. For example the government should make her data bank on poverty in Nigeria available to NGOs. All bureaucratic encumbrances that confront NGOs in their quest for official records should be removed provided that exposing such records does not jeopardize national security. Similarly, whenever an NGOs signs counterpart funding agreement on any poverty alleviation project with the government at any level, the government should meet her own part of the agreement.

The State of infrastructure in Nigeria leaves much to be desired Roads, hospitals, electricity and pipe borne water are not only inadequate but malfunctioning. To check this trend, government at all levels should invest massively in infrastructure. Feeder roads should be constructed throughout rural areas of Nigeria to facilitate the evacuation of farm produce.

More electricity and pipe-borne water facilities should be provided while existing ones should be renovated. This would not only improve the living standards of the rural poor but also help to check rural urban migration which robs rural areas of able bodied young people.

Again, facilities for the harvesting, processing and storage of farm produce should be provided for the rural areas. The shortage of efficient processing and storage facilities in the rural areas create a situation whereby there is a glut in food supply in some periods of the year leading to fall in prices. This tendency robs the rural poor of the opportunity of making profits commensurate with their toil. Besides, much of the farm produce in the rural areas gets rotten due to lack of storage facilities. Provision of efficient storage facilities in rural areas would help to check this trend. The rural poor in Nigeria need to organize themselves into co-operative societies as so doing would be make it easier for them to obtain loans for agricultural and commercial ventures. By organizing into co-operatives, the rural poor would be able to meet the conditionalities set by financial institutions for loans.

v. Besides, financial institutions are more comfortable dealing with co-operative societies than with individuals. These are traditional methods of savings and loans. This culture need to be modernized towards effective poverty alleviation.

vi. Aisha Buhari Foundation and other non-governmental organizations should channel their financial assistance to rural areas through these traditional thrift and loans societies with a view to empowering the rural poor by providing them access to microcredit facilities.

However, it is the opinion of this writer that if these recommendations are adopted, poverty alleviation would receive a major boost in Nigeria. Suffice it to conclude that poverty alleviation should involve every segment of the Nigerian society. It is my submission that the task of poverty alleviation should be a multilateral venture involving foreign governments, international organizations, local and foreign nongovernmental and non-profit multinational organizations, the Nigerian government and of course the Nigerian people.

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