

## **Assessment of National Poverty Reduction Programmes in Nigeria: A Study of National Poverty Eradication Programme (Napep) Ebonyi State**

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### **Abstract**

*The paper sought to assess the National Poverty Reduction Programmes in Nigeria with specific focus on NAPEP Ebonyi State. The study became imperative based on the debilitating effects of poverty which often manifests in loss of hope, aspirations, malnutrition and sometimes sudden death. The startling 69% national poverty level and 73.6% rate in Ebonyi state is a clear indication that poverty is still very high in Nigeria. The study therefore evaluated NAPEP's performance in the area of human capital development, infrastructure facilities, access to safe drinking water, sanitation and access to basic education which are some of the parameters for measuring poverty level. A descriptive survey design was adopted with a sample population of 400 which spread across the six local governments studied. The major instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire, which was distributed to the respondents and a total number of 380 questionnaire were duly filled and returned representing 95% of the sample population. The data collected was analyzed with statistical tables, percentage calculations and chi-square. The study among other thing, found out that NAPEP has not really impacted on the development of human capital, it equally revealed that the agency has not improved access to basic education and infrastructure facilities. Insincerity and corruption on the part of contractors; inadequate sensitization, poor coordination, narrow coverage, excessive politicization have been identified among others as the challenges facing the programme. The paper therefore recommended that poverty reduction programmes should be specific and non-directive to address one or two parameters like per capita income or Human Development Index (HDI), the scope of NAPEP is too broad and this in part has resulted to its failure, politicization of public programmes should be discouraged so that the real poor could benefit from these programmes; government and relevant stakeholders should ensure proper funding, monitoring and shun all manner of corruption. All these will go a long way to further enhance the crusade against poverty in Nigeria especially in Ebonyi State.*

**Keywords:** Poverty, Poverty Reduction, Poverty Eradication, Development

### **1. Introduction**

Poverty reduction has been the concern of government the world over. The concern about poverty world wide perhaps dates back to 1944 when the International Labour Organization (ILO) in its historic Philadelphia declaration drawn up after the Second World War, stated that 'poverty anywhere constitutes a threat to prosperity' (Nwachukwu and Onwubiko, 2008). It was this declaration that necessitated the crusade for alleviation worldwide, especially in the United States of America, where some segments of the society were identified as being generally poor, states of health and suffering from inadequate diet (Dennis and Williams, 1973). However, arriving at a definite and generally acceptable definition of poverty has always been a problem because the concept of poverty means different things to different people or different groups of people. UN (1998) wrote that:

fundamentally, poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and cloth a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living on marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation. (UN statement, June 1998 – signed by the heads of all UN agencies).

According to Nwachukwu and Onwubiko (2008) scholars have come to categorize the definition of poverty into two: absolute and relative poverty. Absolute poverty refers to a situation where an individual lacks resources necessary to sustain himself or herself. Such an individual lacks the basic human needs of food, shelter, and clothing. This definition of poverty in terms of subsistence is predominantly used by scholars in the analysis of poverty in Africa and in the developing countries in general. On the other hand, relative poverty refers to a situation where an individual lacks the necessary resources when compared with other members of the society such that this limits or prevents him from partaking in the normal and desirable activities of life that exists in such a society. It has been argued that poverty takes many forms. According to UN (1995):

Overall poverty takes various forms, including “lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterized by lack of participation in decision making and in civil, social and cultural life. It occurs in all countries: as mass poverty in many developing countries, pockets of poverty amid wealth in developed countries, loss of livelihoods as a result of economic recession, sudden poverty as a result of disaster or conflict, the poverty of low-wage workers, and the utter destitution of people who fall outside family support systems, social institutions and safety nets. (UN, 1995).

A direct effect of poverty can be seen in the virtual paucity of basic infrastructure and social amenities such as roads, health, educational institutions, water supply and other social services. Overt poverty shows up among the under nourished population, particularly the vulnerable groups, most of them children and women (Agena: 2008).

Poverty destroys aspirations, hope and happiness. In Nigeria, as in other poverty stricken nations, this is the poverty one can feel. Poverty affects tolerance of others, support of civil liberties and openness towards foreigners, it also affects ones disposition to participate in community activities, interpersonal trust and self satisfaction (Amoo, 1997; Hugglehart, 1997; Fair backs, 2000; 271). This study will be guided by the definition of poverty by Nwachukwu and Onwubiko (2008). This choice is based on the fact that poverty is both absolute and relative. Though none of these conditions is entirely acceptable by the people, the truth remains that the relativity concept of poverty holds. This is because income is not equitably distributed.

There are established parameters for measuring poverty in a society. These indicators change over time in tune with socio-political and economic realities of a given period.

According to Sen (1999:360) cited in Obi, Nwachukwu and Obiorah (2008:171-172) the first known traditional approaches for measuring poverty began with the specification of a “poverty line”, sometimes called the “head-count measure”. This is applied by counting the number of people below the poverty line income. Secondly, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), uses the Human Development Index (HDI) to measure human progress or retrogression. This it does by utilizing data on life expectancy, adult literacy rate and Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) or real GDP per capital adjusted for the local cost of living. Thirdly, the overseas development council measures poverty or the stage of a country’s development by the use of Physical Quality Life Index (PQLI) composed from three social indicators of life expectancy, infant mortality and literacy. A country is rated on each of the three indicators from 1 to 100 with a grade of 100 being the lowest rating; and a simple average for the three is calculated for each country. The lower the PQLI, the poorer the country and vice versa (see Eminue 2005:507). Poverty can also be measured using Human Poverty Index (HPI). According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the HPI is a multidimensional device for measuring the “extent” of deprecation, the proportion of people in the community who are left out of progress”. To this end, some people have relied on measuring the intensity of poverty, where the deviations of the incomes of the poor from the poverty line and averaged and divided by the poverty line and expressed as a percentage of the poverty line. Others have however used the Gini Index, which measures the gap between the wealthiest and the poorest as a useful indicator of a country’s national wealth (UNDP, 1997:25; Eminue, 2005:507).

Data from the Federal Office of Statistics on poverty in Nigeria (1999) shows that majority of the poor were located in the rural areas and that poverty increased from 28.9% in 1980 to 51.4% in 1985, dropped to 46.0% in 1992 but increased to 69.8% in 1996. Urban poverty on the other hand, increased from 17.2% in 1980 to 37.8% in 1985 and increased to 58.2% in 1996. By 1996, infant mortality had reached 147 and 217 per 1000 birth overall in urban and rural households respectively. The Federal Ministry of Health Statistics indicates that the major causes of death are malaria (919) and dysentery (386) per 100,000 Nigerians.

It has been argued that this health status is a manifestation of poverty. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI) ranked Nigeria as the 142<sup>nd</sup> with HDI of 0.40 among 174 countries listed in 1997. By 1999, the country ranked 151<sup>st</sup> while Nigeria's human poverty index (HPI) was 41.6%, which placed her among the 25 poorest nations in the world. (UNAP, 1999).

In 1999, the federal government observed that poverty was on the increase in Nigeria despite the large number of on-going efforts and programmes to fight poverty. Although past regimes in Nigeria had attempted to tackle poverty through the creation of institutions and agencies such as Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative Bank (NACB), Peoples Bank, Family Economic Advancement programme (FEAP), River Basin Authorities, Operations Feed the Nation, Rural Banking, Universal Basic Education (UBA), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and similar agencies, all of these programme had minimal impact on the people.

The government identified the following challenges;

Poor coordination of activities; dwindling resources flow; failure to build in sustainability mechanisms; Lack of complementary efforts from beneficiaries; poor coordination leading to low accountability and avoidable disharmonisation of policies; lack of well articulated policy for poverty eradication; lack of sustainability of programme and projects; absence of achievable target setting; absence of monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment; absence of effective coordination and collaboration between the agencies of government and among the three tiers of government and duplication of functions resulting in unnecessary rivalry among institutions (NAPEP Today; 2007).

Following a review of these problems, the federal government established the need to:

- a. Streamline and rationalize the functions of core poverty alleviation institutions and agencies;
  - b. Reduce their overlapping functions;
  - c. Ensure effective performance;
  - d. Improve coordination of poverty eradication activities and
  - e. Improve collaboration with state governments, local governments, and international donor agencies.
- (NAPEP Today; 2007).

The aforementioned therefore, provided the grounds for the establishment of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) by the federal government in January 2001, representing a commitment by government to tackle the poverty issue in the country. NAPEP was drawn up by the federal government with the prime aim of eradicating core (extreme) poverty in the country by the year 2010, generally in line with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) of halving the proportion of people living in poverty by the year 2015. Functions of NAPEP include:

- To coordinate all poverty eradication efforts in the federation;
- To monitor all poverty eradication activities of the federal government;
- To maintain a comprehensive and detailed databank on all activities aimed at eradicating poverty in Nigeria;
- To carryout impact assessment of all efforts meant to eradicate poverty in Nigeria and suggest the necessary reviews and policies required to enhance effectiveness and
- To directly intervene in key sectors of critically implementing scaled key priority projects.

Structurally, NAPEP has five main divisions; the National Poverty Eradication Council (NAPEC). The National Coordination Committee (NCC), State Poverty Eradication Council (SPECS) State Coordination Committees (SCCS) and Local Government Monitoring Committees (LGMCS). In other to achieve its objective, NAPEP designed a number of programmes which include Multi-Partner Matching Funds (MP-MF) Farmers, Empowerment Programme (FEP), Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP), General Micro Credit and Grants, Promise Keeper Programme (PKP), KEKE-NAPEP, Village Economic Development Solution (VEDs) among others. How far these programmes have reduced the rate of poverty in Nigeria is a matter subject to empirical study.

NAPEP projects are primarily funded or supported by;

- i. Government (annual budgetary allocations)
- ii. Public Private Partnership
  - Commercial banks and other financial intermediaries

- Business firms, including multinationals
- Foundations
- Foundations, individuals and families

iii. Foreign Government Assistance and Support Religious bodies

iv. Other sources (Partnership Enlargement Projects).

According to the former National Coordinator of the programme and special Assistant to the President Dr. Magnus Kpakol since inception in 2001, the programme has received N11.8 billion as budgetary allocation, N4 billion for procurement of Keke NAPEP, N10 billion from State Government and Commercial Banks for Multi-Partnership Programme and N8.2 billion from Millennium Development Goal (MDG) this totals N34 billion. However, the NAPEP boss explained that about N21.7 billion has been spent so far. (Daily champion, Wednesday 18, 2009: 7).

It is argued that NAPEP has not been able to fully realize its objectives 10 years after the introduction of the programme. Possibly because poverty level in Nigeria is still on the increasing side. The Harmonized Nigerian living standard survey (2010) released by the National Bureau of Statistics puts the Nigeria's poverty incidence at 69% or 112.47 million people are classified as people living in poverty. In 2013, the National Poverty level was put at 70%.

Ebonyi State was created on October 1, 1996 from the former Abia and Enugu states, with Abakaliki as the state capital. It is located in the south eastern region of Nigeria, bounded to the north by Benue State, to the west by Enugu State, to the east by Cross River State and to the south by Abia State. The state is endowed with abundant natural resources and the agricultural potential is great. Over 85% of the population of the people reside in the rural heartland, where the economically active workforce is about 38%, and the rural workforce income, in different employment appeared rather small (Chukwu, 2012).

The history of poverty reduction programmes in Ebonyi State could be traced to the federal governments efforts at tackling the problem of poverty since independence. Ebonyi people have not changed rather they have been recognized differently in the federation as a result of state creation. Hence, they have benefited from the programmes discussed above. However, following the establishment of NAPEP in 2001, Ebonyi state keyed into the programme with high expectations of the intended benefits. Considering the current poverty profile in the state, it appears that expectations of poverty reduction and general improvement in the standard of living of the people have not been realized.

The recent report from the National Bureau of Statistics (2013) show that about 73.6, Ebonyians are poor. Poverty appears to be one of the states deadliest diseases. The United Nations Development Programme, UNDP (2002), Human development report revealed that Enugu/Ebonyi ranked low (0.466) on the Human Development Index (HDI), a combined measure of longevity (physical health), knowledge (education) and income (purchasing power) low expectancy at birth is estimated to below 59.2 years for male and 60.7 years for female. Mortality rate for children under 5 is 191 per 100 life (Agena, 2008). Over one third (1/3) of the states population are still without clean sources of drinking water and sanitation. A survey of parasites carried out on the different drinking water sources, with 36 water samples in Ohaukwu Local Government is shown in table one below.

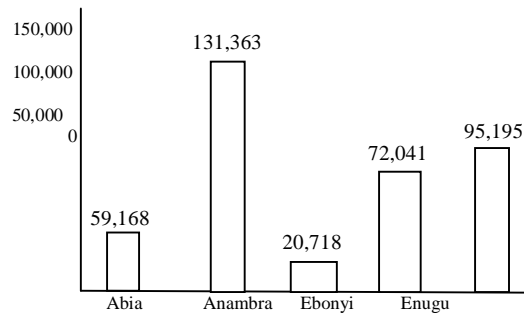
**Table 1: Summary of the Rate of Occurrence of Parasites in different Water Sources in Selected Local Governments (Ohaukwu LGA)**

Major (water) source	Total number of samples	Giardia intesinalis (%)	Entamoeba histlytica (%)	Cryptosporidium parvum (%)	Total no of parasites	Percentage of occurrence of parasites (%)
Boreholes	6	2(33.3)	2(33.3)	—	4	9.5
Wells	5	2(40)	2(40)	3(60)	6	14.3
Ponds	5	2(40)	3(60)	1(20)	7	16.7
Rain (tank)	3	1(33.3)	1(33.3)	2(66.6)	4	9.5
Rivers	11	8(72.7)	—	5(45.5)	13	31.0
Spring	1	—	—	3(60)	—	19.0
Steam	5	3(60)	2(40)	(27.7)	8	—
Total	36	18(50)	10(38.8)	14(27.7)	42	100

Source: Odikamnoro, et al (2014)

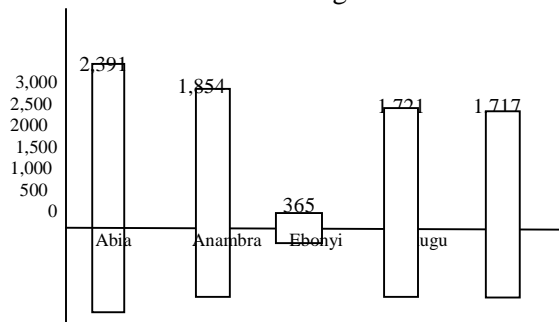
The above table shows that a total of 36 samples were collected from the 12 sample sites and examined. *Giardia intestinalis* cysts were observed to be 50% (18/36), *Entamoeba histolytica* cyst were 27.7% (10/36) and *cryptosporidium parvum* were 38.8% (14/36). According to the result of the study the rivers harboured the highest number of parasites, followed by the stream, the pond and the wells. While the boreholes and rain water harboured the least number of parasites. This result reveals a high rate of occurrence of parasites in almost all the sample sites examined. (Odikamnor, Ikeh, Uhuo, Akpan and Azi, 2014). On states level of GDP conducted in 2010, Ebonyi State ranked 34<sup>th</sup> out of the 36 states of the federation with a GDP of US \$21, 732 as against Lagos State which had the highest GDP of US \$ 741,674. The 2010 Basic Education Profile for the five south eastern states show that Ebonyi State has the least Early Childcare Development (ECD) centres. The facts and figures are shown in the following charts.

**Number of Ecd Centers and Schools**



Source: (Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), 2010 basic education profile South East Region).

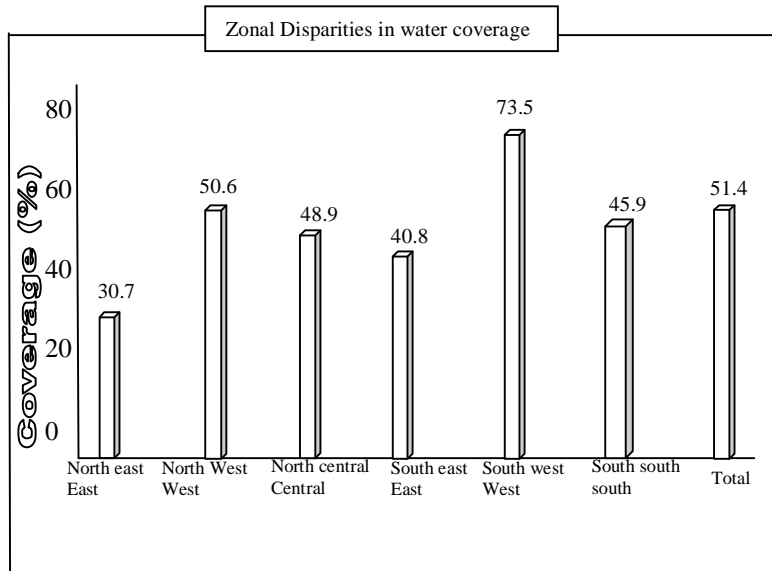
The above chart shows Gross enrolment (GR) in ECD centers by states in the south east zone, with Anambra 131,363 having the highest number of centres followed by Imo with 95,195. Ebonyi state has the least ECD centres with 20,718. Also, the study equally shows that Ebonyi State has the least number of teaching staff in basic education schools. This can be found in the following table.



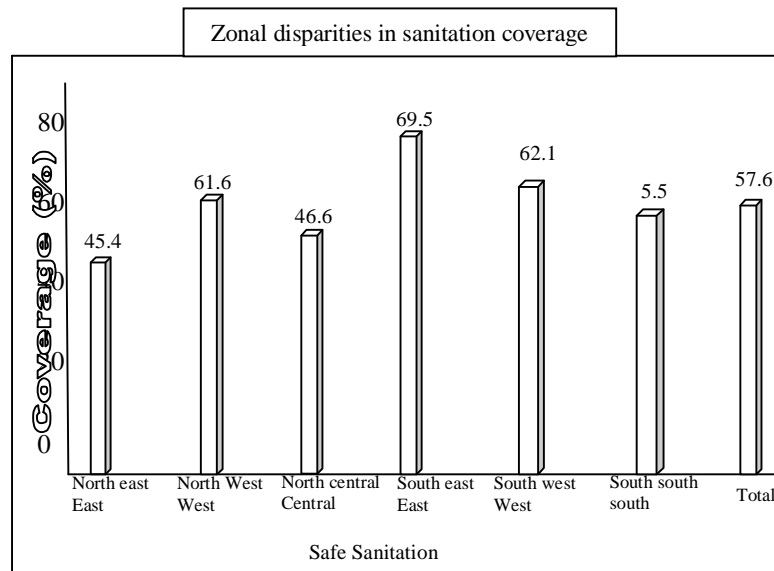
Source: (Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), 2010 basic education profile South East Region).

Abia state has the highest number of teachers with 2,391 while Ebonyi has the least with 365. On pupil enrolment the report shows that Ebonyi State has least with 18,167 as against Anambra with the highest enrolment of 111,163. (Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), 2010 basic education profile).

Access to safe source of drinking water sanitation is still a major challenge in Nigeria. The UNICEF water and sanitation monitoring platform – country summary sheet, 2008 attest to this assertion. The national disparities in water and sanitation coverage reveal the following



Improved Water Sources  
Source CWIQS 2006



Source CWIQS 2006

Some Ebonyi women are seen almost on daily basis doing one form of hard labour or the other to provide means of livelihood for their children. In spite of state government efforts at tackling youth unemployment, the incidence is still high. This has made a lot of people migrate on daily basis from the rural communities across the 13 local governments of the state to the major cities like Onueke, Afikpo and Abakaliki, the state capital, and has increased the rate of urbanization with its attendant problem of armed robbery, housing problem, prostitution, increasing rate of unemployment among others. The recent recruitment exercise conducted by the Ebonyi State Secondary Education Board where more than 3,000 youths struggled just to pick the forms only revealed the level of unemployment in the state. This has forced most youths out of the state in search of job. Ebonyi youths are seen hawking different items in the major cities like Lagos, Onitsha, Port Harcourt, Abuja etc.

These staggering statistics show that poverty is still high in Ebonyi State. It appears efforts at poverty reduction in the state have not yielded the desired result. It therefore behooves a careful observer to investigate the performance of NAPEP in Ebonyi State, to ascertain its achievements, weaknesses and strength in order to improve on the system.

## **2. Statement of Problem**

Poverty in Ebonyi State is a pervasive phenomenon characterized by low levels of income and social deprivation. The National Bureau of Statistics (2013) reports that 73.6 percent Ebonyians are poor. Women, children and the elderly are the worst hit. Many people in the state even in the urban centres lack access to clean source of water, ensuring adequate sanitation has become problematic as refuse dumps litter major streets. Healthcare facilities are not adequately provided, and people still die of preventable diseases. Many primary and secondary schools are still in dilapidated state inspite of the state government benevolence of free primary and secondary education, enrollment is still low when compared with other states in the federation. According to Chukwu (2012) physical infrastructure (such as roads, portable water and electricity) and social services (such as education, health, recreation and security) are not adequately provided. Mortality rate is still high, women still engage in hard labour to fend for their children and complement the family income. The lack of infrastructure facilities and the degrading condition of life in most rural communities has resulted to increasing migration/inflow of people into the capital city thus leading to congestion and attendant urban problems like unemployment, increasing house rents and general high cost of living, amidst low level of income. Poor road network in the rural communities has compounded the problem of the rural dwellers as it has become difficult to evacuate their farm produce to various markets in the state. This is even more unfortunate when considered that over 85% of the population reside in the rural areas and largely farmers (Chukwu 2012). Several policies and programmes established to address the problem of poverty in the country have done little. An important objective of NAPEP is to help “eradicate extreme poverty by the year 2010, in line with the United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals (MGDs) of halving the proportion of people living in poverty by the year 2015. In spite of the huge sum of money and other resources invested in the crusade of poverty eradication programmes in Nigeria, majority of Nigerians, especially in Ebonyi still suffer from absolute poverty. The extent those who design these programmes involve prospective or target beneficiaries is also worrisome. It appears there is no accurate data of those who are actually suffering from absolute poverty. The scope of these programmes like NAPEP is too broad that its objectives can hardly be achieved as most of the tasks it sets out to achieve have been taken care of by the National Directorate of Employment (NDE). Again, poverty reduction programmes like some other public programmes are not immuned from excessive politicization and poor coordination. Often times, these programmes are hijacked by the top political class. This feature most in recruitment, appointment and selection of both beneficiaries and workers of these agencies. This has made mess of the fight against poverty as the real poor, especially in the rural communities are left out. The much trumpeted achievement of NAPEP as it were, has not translated to poverty reduction one year to the MDGs 2015 target.

It is against the background and stated problems that the researcher posed the following questions to guide the study.

## **3. Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the Non-Directive Approach to community development propounded by Omoruyi (2001) cited in Ndukwe (2005:38). This approach emphasizes the people’s involvement. Non-directive approach entails allowing the people to identify their needs or problems, prioritize the needs, decide on what to do to solve the problems and take action on the plan drawn. The role of the outside agency is that of acting as a catalyst that stimulates and motivates the people to be actively involved in the improvement of their ways of life. This is the opposite of the directive approach whereby projects and programmes are imposed on the people.

Poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria which aim at improving the living conditions of people especially the rural dwellers have adopted directive approach. The programmes are designed without involving the prospective beneficiaries and this has been one of the major causes of its failure. Government has always adopted directive approach where an agency like NAPEP develops and design project for the people. The government acts as the ultimate judge of what is good for the people. The government decides on what it feels is good for the people and what their needs are and goes on to fashion out a project that will achieve this. The government or its agency provides all that is needed, including staff, equipment etc.

The directive approach can as well be regarded as “Top down” approach.

Both Idoha (2002), Eminue (2005) and Obi, Obi, Nwachukwu and Obiorah (2008) agreed that lack of participation of the poor at various levels of the anti-poverty programmes; “Top down” rather than “bottom-up” approach, and lack of involvement of beneficiaries in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation have been the problems of poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria.

This is what Okoli (1995) called a blue print approach. A situation whereby a motely group of experts and professionals (planners, administrators and researchers) sits together, deliberates on the critical needs of the rural people, evaluates the resources available, decides on the projects, tasks and programmes needed for the solution of the problems and proceeds to site and execute the programmes, with or without the participation of the rural population. This approach unfortunately has failed to transform the abject conditions of the rural population. This failure which has been widely acknowledged by (Ega, et al 1989; Sanda, ed; 1988, Ebong, 1973 and Weitz, 1971) is due not only to the poor conceptualization of rural development programmes, but also primarily to the absence of “fit” in critical variables involved in the process.

According to Lawal and Hassan (2012), the relationship between NAPEP and the poor population is not different from that of the public service in general. The relationship between the Nigerian government and the citizenry is that of limited interaction with members of the public. By limited interaction, we mean that members of the public, and indeed the poor population are not given opportunity to participate in the decision making process with regards to how they could be assisted. At best, beneficiaries were handpicked for one scheme or the other. Again, it is important to emphasize the fact that the pattern of distribution of its benefits is selective, and cosmetics.

The relevance of the approach to the study is based on the fact that any meaningful poverty reduction programme will try to include the people in the policy formulation as well as implementation. This has never been the case as poverty reduction efforts by both the federal and state governments have always employed the blue print or directive approach. The real poor are often alienated from government policies. The lopsided nature of these programmes like NAPEP, has not only failed to be an acceptable measure to tackle the scourge of poverty in Nigeria but has resulted to erosion of public confidence as the masses, especially those affected by absolute poverty often see these programmes as efforts to still widen the gap between the rich and the poor in the country. It is therefore incumbent on those who are the designers of public policies and programmes to bridge the psychological and social distance between the government and the masses in terms of involving them in both formulation of policies and programmes as well as citing of projects to improve their wellbeing. Studies have shown that non-directive approach to rural development especially poverty reduction yields a better result. This will make the people see the programme as their own and work with the government to achieve the goal of poverty reduction.

#### **4. Methodology**

The researchers adopted descriptive survey design to ascertain what is or what projects NAPEP has carried out within the study period. It is a type of design in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group.

The study covered six selected Local Government Areas, spread across the three senatorial zones of the state. They are Afikpo North Local Government located at Afikpo main town, Abakaliki Local Government located at Nkaliki and Ikwo Local Government Headquarters located at Onuebonyi Echara Ikwo others include Ohaukwu local government area, Ivo local government area and Ezza south local government area.

The population of the study comprised all the citizens of the six selected local governments including the staff of the local governments and the staff of NAPEP secretariat located at No. 1A Edward Nkwegwu close off 1A Ogoja Road Abakaliki Ebonyi State. According to the 2006 census, the total population of the selected local government areas was 971,844. The table below shows the population of each of the local governments.



**Table 2: Population of Selected Local Government Areas**

S/n	Names of the local government areas selected	Senatorial zone	Population
1	Abakaliki local government area	Ebonyi North	149,683
2	Ohaukwu local government area	Ebonyi North	195,555
3	Ikwo local government area	Ebonyi Central	214,969
4	Ezza south local government area	Ebonyi Central	133,625
5	Afikpo North local government area	Ebonyi South	156,649
6	Ivo local government area	Ebonyi South	121,363
Total			971,844

Source: National population census, 2006.

Primary source of data was used. Primary data were collected through the instrument of questionnaire, personal interview with some of the officials of NAPEP in the state and all other firsthand information that was sourced through Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The primary data were corroborated with secondary documents from published bulletin, official gazette and newspapers, NAPEP's magazine and white paper etc.

The main instrument used was a structured questionnaire to elicit and generate information concerning NAPEP's performance in the state from the respondents. Respondents were given four options of strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree and disagree to ascertain the degree of acceptance or rejection of the views expressed in the questionnaire. Findings of the study were based on the analysis of the data generated from the respondents.

### 5. Findings

In view of the analysis of the data collected in the course of the study, the following findings were made

1. The paper revealed that NAPEP exists in Ebonyi state and have made some impact especially by providing Keke-NAPEP at a subsidized rates to selected unemployed youths and monthly stipends to few indigent students. However, the programme has failed to be a tool for sustainable poverty reduction in Ebonyi State.
2. The study has shown that NAPEP has not impacted on the development of human capital in Ebonyi State as access to basic education and adult literacy is still very low.
3. The paper equally revealed that NAPEP has not improved infrastructure facilities in Ebonyi State. This result was corroborated by Chukwu (2012) when he wrote that physical infrastructure (such as roads, portable water and electricity) and social services (such as education, health, recreation and security) are not adequately provided in Ebonyi state.
4. The study has also shown that NAPEP has not improved access to safe drinking water in Ebonyi state. A survey of parasites in drinking water sources in rural communities of Ohaukwu local government area, one of the local governments studied shows that there is prevalent of parasites and water borne diseases (Odikamnor, Ikeh, Uhuo, Akpan and Azi, 2014). This is same for the other local governments studied where access to safe source of drinking water was a problem.
5. The study equally revealed that the directive approach to development efforts especially poverty reduction programmes has been the bane of development programmes in Nigeria. NAPEP also suffers from this perennial problem.
6. Finally, NAPEP has failed to be a tool for a sustained poverty reduction in Nigeria as a result of excessive politicization of the programme. This has alienated the real poor from benefiting as the high profile political office holders have diverted the dividends of the programme to their loyalists and errand boys.

### 6. Conclusion

In the study, there has been an attempt to assess the national poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria with a particular focus on the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) Ebonyi State. NAPEP was established in 2001 to eradicate core (extreme) poverty in the country by the year 2010, generally in line with the United Nations Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) of halving the proportion of people living in poverty by the year 2015. Going by the high expectations of the intended benefits and the euphoria that followed the establishment of the programme, compared with the reality on ground, one will conclude that the agency has done little in terms of poverty reduction.

Parameters for measuring poverty such as the head-count measure or the poverty line, per capita income, the Human Development Index (HDI), which measures human progress or retrogression by utilizing data on life expectancy, adult literacy rate and Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) show that poverty is still high, as access to quality education, safe drinking water and infrastructure facilities in Nigeria, especially in Ebonyi state is still a problem. The harmonized Nigerian living standard survey (2010) released by the National Bureau of Statistics puts the Nigeria's poverty incidence at 69%. Also the recent report from the National Bureau of Statistics (2013) show that about 73.6%, Ebonyians are poor, these statistics buttressed the point that poverty is still high in Nigeria. NAPEP is not immuned to such factors that resulted to the failure of the previous poverty reduction programmes such as insincerity and corruption on the part of contractors; inadequate sensitization, poor coordination, narrow coverage, limited resources and limitless number of legible beneficiaries. The exact and real poor are most times skipped consequent upon the politicization of public programmes and psychological distance between the leaders and their followers occasioned by directive approach to development efforts especially poverty reduction. Unless these challenges are addressed efforts at poverty reduction in Nigeria will be a mirage.

## **7. Recommendations**

In view of the foregoing the paper therefore recommended as follows:

1. The approach to poverty reduction and most rural development programmes in Nigeria has been directive and has not resulted to the achievement of goals of poverty reduction. Government should involve the target beneficiaries in the formulation as well as implementation of policies and programmes made for them.
2. Poverty reduction programmes should be specific to address one or two parameters like per capita income and or human development index (HDI), as the study has shown that one of the factors responsible for the failure of NAPEP was its too broad objective.
3. It is also the recommendation of this paper that government and all relevant stake holders should ensure proper funding of poverty reduction programmes especially in the area of human development to liberate the masses from servitude.
4. Politicization of government programmes has alienated the real poor from benefiting from national programmes like NAPEP; therefore, efforts should be made for proper monitoring of relevant and related programmes by the stakeholders to ensure the realization of the intended goals and objectives of these programmes.
5. Also, in order to address the problem of poverty in Nigeria government should create an enabling environment for youths to thrive. This can be done through massive skill acquisition and establishment of industries where these youths can be absorbed. The high rate of youth unemployment when septuagenarians and octogenarians surround the corridor of power and try to perpetuate their stay in public offices is unacceptable and not the best practice, it should be discouraged.
6. Finally, unless the issue of corruption is taken seriously, people will continue to misappropriate and embezzle public fund unhindered. Corruption as a monster should be tackled before any meaningful benefit will yield from public programmes. This also, is one of the militating factors against the objectives of NAPEP.

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