

THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

This paper explores "The Impact of Poverty Alleviation programmes on Sustainable Development in Rivers State". It portrays a great idea that poverty alleviation to a very large extent has a lot of impact on the achievement of sustainable development by improving the quality of life that stands as the social dimension, advancing the economy that represent the economic dimension and controlling the adverse activities of the poor that degrades the environment which is the third dimension that need to be strengthened in other to achieve sustainable development. The methodology adopted was secondary method of data collection as to generate enough of information about the role of poverty alleviation and how best to achieve sustainable in Rivers State. The theoretical framework adopted was structural-functionalism to be able to see the interrelatedness and interconnectedness between institutions in the society and the link between poverty alleviation and achievement of sustainable development in societies globally. This paper finally recommends that there should be a continuity of any poverty alleviation programme in the state because its sustainability will do a lot to emancipate majority of the population out of poverty as to achieve sustainable development; the environmental impact assessment agency should be more serious to mitigate the level of environmental degradation by monitoring and punishing offenders; need for participatory decision-making and policy formulation for wholistic impact geared towards the achievement of the targeted objectives; etc.

Key words: Poverty, Poverty Alleviation, Sustainable Development, Structural-Functionalism.

Introduction

Poverty is a well known global social menace that threatens more especially in the sub-Saharan African Countries that finds it extremely difficult to develop. Within the developing and underdeveloped countries, poverty is perpetuating deeply in their societies, examples are countries in South America like Mexico, Brazil, etc India, parts of Asian continent with exception to the Asian Tigers, etc. This has actually widened the gap between the two classes of human being in any society - the rich and the poor.

Moreover, this deepen level of poverty has infact resulted to a large number or percentage of these impoverished countries population living in excruciating boredom. The level of difficulties that eventually culminates to increase in high level of crimes in the various societies in the country. This is necessitated by hunger and starvation, deprivation of all sorts, unemployment, lack of accessibility to good health care system, inadequate provision of social amenities and over and above all, government inability to provide social security as it is

obtainable in a developed society. In Nigeria it is glaring that the mode of production system, the capitalist imperialistic mode of production perpetrated by the colonial imperialist and Nigeria's leadership problem are the major factors that have really created poverty in the system.

Furthermore, irrespective of the amount of Nigeria's oil wealth, about 70% of the citizens are living below the poverty line of \$1 per day, at the same time, Nigeria ranks 152 out of 175 countries of the world in the achievement of citizens advancement (UNDP, 2003). In Nigeria generally and in Rivers State particularly women and children are the worst heat more especially single parenthood headed by women.

Furthermore, irrespective of the amount of Nigeria's oil wealth, about 70% of the citizens are living below the poverty line of \$1 per day, at the same time, Nigeria ranks 152 out of 175 countries of the world in the achievement of citizens advancement (UNDP, 2003). In Nigeria generally and in Rivers State particularly, women and children are the worst heat more especially single parenthood headed by women. The poverty level can easily be understood by World Bank findings that out of 130 million of Nigerian population, 97.2 million are living below poverty line of less than \$1 per day (Okereocha, 2006).

Consequently, efforts has been made by the Nigerian government and Rivers State government to alleviate the sufferings of those in poverty class through series of poverty alleviation programmes formulated to curb the situation that is quite absurd. Instances of federal government programmes are; National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Directorate of Food, roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA), Rivers State Strategic Empowerment Scheme (RSSES) etc. Despite the numerous poverty alleviation programmes by both the National and State governments, poverty appears to be on the increase instead of a decline. This has actually made it impossible for most Rivers State men, women and youths to escape from poverty. It is good to escape from poverty but better to conquer poverty, for when you conquer poverty it implies that at that stage of life, it is your money that should be working for you and not you overlabouring to survive in life anymore.

In addition, poor governance and lack of political will by Nigerian political leaders has immensely contributed to adverse poverty situation in Rivers State. This unpleasant situation has caused unequal opportunity within the society, untold hardship, low life expectancy and so on, as the consequences of poverty on the people and a degraded environment caused by the activities of the poor.

Finally, despite all these government programmes to alleviate poverty in Rivers State, poverty has been on the increase that made it impossible for sustainable development to be achieved. The incidence of poverty in Nigeria has been on increase to 7.2%, between 1980 and 1996, and got reduced to 29.09% in 2004 in Rivers State (UNDP, 2006). The poverty rate in south-South zone which Rivers State is part of, is quite astronomical, to 74.8% which stand as the highest in the zone from 45.35% compared to the abundance of wealth in the zone (UNDP, 2006). Considering the resources in the zone, the poverty level goes to explain why unrest and frustration among people are so evident. This situation has resulted to so many activities that degrade the environment together with the struggle to survive and it has caused all the effort to achieve sustainable development in Rivers State to fail meeting the set target. This is the task this research study has to carry out to show the link between poverty alleviation and

sustainable development; also to elucidate the impact of poverty alleviation programmes on sustainable development in Rivers State.

Theoretical Framework

The theory adopted for this article is structural - functionalism that became known in nineteenth -century Europe. Among the proponents of this theory is the highly influential French sociologist, Emile Durkheim and other American Sociologist like Talcott Parsons who helped to advance the theory. Considering similarities found in Biology, such equally, was applied to the component parts of the society based on the interrelatedness of these parts that make up the system. Considering society carefully in relation to its component units gives a clear understanding of the entire whole. This is so because social structures operate in an interdependent and interrelated manner to meet up with the fundamental needs for societal existence, harmoniously (Haralambos and Holborn, 2008).

However, it was Robert K. Merton, Talcott Parsons, and Marion Levy who introduced structural functionalism to the study of the socio-political system. There are other types of functionalism such as eclectic and empirical, aside from structural functionalism (Ikpe, 2010). Whereas, political scientists such as Gabriel Almond, William Mitchell and James Coleman chooses the structural functional framework of sociologists to political analysis (Ikpe, 2010). The purpose and the arrangement of every system is based on principles such as identification of structures, societal interconnectedness, component parts particular function performance, interrelatedness of component parts with mutual resolution of tensions and identification of objective and basic idea of societal structures (Ikpe, 2010).

Moreover, three important political scientist involved in the discuss of structural functional analysis are William Mitchel, David Apter and Gabriel Almond. Also, worthy of mention is Karl Deutsch (Ikpe, 2010). Almond in his assumptions is of the view that all political systems have political structures with same responsibility performed/carried out differently based on the structure in place, and having many functions within a mixed system culturally (Ikpe, 2010). The political structures takes care of the input and output processes from the environment to the political system respectively. This stands as the functions that geared towards meeting the need of the citizens in the society (Ikpe, 2010).

Finally, structural functional analysis is best to the understanding of how social systems works. Also, Radcliffe-Brown (1881 - 1955) and Bronislaw Malinowski (1884 - 1942) are of the view that the functional relations in the society are interrelated and interconnected, equally interdependent. Society is viewed as a whole comprising different parts (structural parts) which has different responsibilities to carry out as their functions in a well organized pattern to ensure achievement of set goals meant for those in the society to maintain equitable and harmonious existence (Igwe, 2002).

In conclusion, the structural functionalism is the adequate theory to adopt in carrying out study that concerns the environment - society and the political system taking cognizance of both their interrelatedness and interdependent nature.

Methodology

The research design is descriptive research design which deals with data collection and as a case study analysis. Historically, poverty is seen to be deeply rooted (Goloin and Reinert, 2002). Case study design is an acceptable scientific pattern of investigation and an ideal design

to use for public policies and developmental evaluations. It equally helps to determine the linkage between concepts or phenomena (Jhonson, Richard and Regnolds, 2001). Thus the population under study is Rivers State which has about five million people (NPC, 2006). The study will make use of secondary method of data collection. The secondary sources of data include, text books, journals, magazines, newspapers and government publications, alongside related research materials from internet sources. These are the instruments that will be adopted, which will provide the baseline data for the study. Lastly, the information collected from these sources will be properly analyzed scientifically and systematically to be able to draw a conclusion and recommend on the way forward to ensure that there are impactation of poverty alleviation programmes on sustainable development in Rivers State.

Conceptual Definitions

POVERTY: Poverty connotes a precarious situation that is hopeless. Also, "Poverty is the shortage of the prerequisites of life and the unaffordability of the basic needs of life existence. Poverty is seen as a conscious phenomenon that has to do with an individual; therefore, it is concerned with material lack" (Achinulo, 2015; 169). The situation can be temporary or in perpetuity depending on the system of governance that is in operation within that particular society. Equally, an individual has a role to play because an individual's decision with determination that is matched with action, to a large extent determines his or her destination in the societal and cultural setting.

POVERTY ALLEVIATION; Poverty alleviation are those measures, programmes, strategies, etc, put in place to ensure a better standard of living for human being. It is all about bringing good welfare that will emancipate the poor from poverty class, to live a quality life. Alleviation stands for attempts to ameliorate the difficult economic conditions that affects all categories of human being in Nigeria and all around the globe (Gbarabe, 2009).

Moreover, it appears that, poverty and inequality are natural phenomena but, what seems to mark the difference is that the developed countries have provisions in form of social security and welfare practice that ameliorate the harsh sufferings of those in these poverty categories, examples are; payments to the poor and jobless, old people, widows and widowers, those unable to work because they are ill, etc. The percentage of the population living in abject poverty is about 70% in Nigeria (Omotola, 2008).

DEVELOPMENT: This is the action or process of advancement. It is all embracing and comprehensive process that implies advancement to an aspired level of existence. The realization of abilities and ensuring its manifestation is a process of development that can turn around an individual or society for good and even to a better state of existence. Also, the capabilities of an individual or group of people to change situations, circumstances and a particular condition is an obvious process of development that transforms people and society. And for development to be achieved, there should be a serious structural change in ways of governance in the society for which will improve the quality of life of the people. Recognizing that development is not just about economic growth rather, it is a holistic phenomenon that starts with man and ends with man for his own good. Government therefore has to harness the human capacity resources through empowerment, education, training and retaining to achieve development.

However, the most fundamental questions relating to the meaning of development as a measure of it are thus; what has been the situation on poverty, unemployment and inequality? If these three are on the decline from high levels, it implies that development has occurred while if the three variables are on the increase, irrespective of the increase of per capita income, it will be surprising to call such outcome, development (Seers, 1972).

Development connotes the level of identification of the socio-economic and political structures and ethos with the industrialized societies of the West-Europe and North America. While underdevelopment is identified in Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, by the degree of poverty and lack of industrialization of their societies (Wosu, 2013). Development implies goodlife for all and a change that starts from the bottom to the top and not the other way round (Peet and Hartwick, 2009). Equally, development is not static rather a leap from one stage to another, its dynamism is what Hegel called nodal leap (Wosu, 2013).

Sustainable Development

The origin of sustainable development started in 1798 by Thomas Malthus an economist from England in an essay on the principle of population (Roger, Jalal and Boyd, 2008). The essay was revised in 1803 as an essay on the principle of population with a cumulative view effects on human happiness and its prospects on removal or mitigation of the evil it occasions. Malthus assertion was that uncontrolled population will have accelerated increase against the slouch pace ratio of man's subsistence (Roger, Jalal and Boyd, 2008). In Malthus view, conspicuous consumption and profligate spending to be of negative effects on ever-increasing population although, the cornucopian's are of a contrary idea, asserting that out of invention that is developmental, such population can equally enjoy more benefits in the world (Rogers, Jalal and Boyd, 2008). Sustainable development over the years, has been undergoing an evaluation process starting from 1972 United Nation (UN) conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden to 2002 World Summit that was held in Johannesburg, south Africa (Rogers, Jalal and Boyd, 2008).

Moreover, world leaders have agreed on the 4th of September, 2002 to ensure a good and equity-based global society that should be for mutual benefit and protection of human dignity. Also, to create a better future by ensuring that poverty, environmental degradation and whatever practice that is unsustainable are put to a stop. Equally, guaranteeing strengthening the interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development at all levels (Amunalu, Abdullahi and Adeoba, 2005). In all these, sustainable development is a continuous, progressive and perennial development that takes care of generations equitably in perpetuity. Brundtland commission on environment and development, 1987 defined it as "Development that can meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs" (Rogers, Jalal and Boyd, 2008:42).

Furthermore, to achieve sustainable development, there are necessary steps to apply in every society. Socio-economic developments synergized with environmental protection are the three necessary aspects that have to be strengthened to guarantee the achievement of sustainable development. This is what the United Nations (UN) 2005 World Summit refers to as "interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars (UN, 2005). Therefore, there is an interdependence and interconnectedness of the environment, economics and social aspects of every society to determine its status symbol.

Again, looking at sustainable development from the local milieu, is a function of five different aspects that is equally observe at the national levels. These comprises both the national and external factors which include; socio-cultural belief, systems and local production with technologicalbases, available technologies and development ideologies respectively. Also, inclusive are population, political and economic factors together with biophysical and socio-economic resources (Omiunu, 2012). From the local perspective, it is glaring that the greater number of those impoverished people are majorly rural dwellers; few ones are found in the urban areas in comparism. To ensure the achievement of sustainable development, various levels of government in Nigeria deem it feat and proper to initiate the plethora of poverty alleviation programmes with the view that curbing the problem of poverty, sustainable development will be easily achieved.

It is clear that poverty level, patterns of production and consumption, protection and management of the environment for socio-economic development are basic prerequisites that determine achievement of sustainable development. The demarcation between the wealthy and the poor, as well as between the developed and developing countries stand as big challenges. The depletion of environment and its natural resources; air, water and marine pollutions cause the developing countries to be more vulnerable to disease that impair their quality of life. A major challenge stand to be the internationalization of markets and capital in the global arena that does not have equitable benefits to all rather, the developed countries are in a better chance to benefit at the expense of the developing countries that do not have the capacity (Animalu, Abdulahi and Adeoba, 2005). Moreover, lack of industrialization and technological advancement is a major challenge to the achievement of sustainable development in Third World Countries. To be able to meet up 2030 sustainable development targets, Third World Countries should tackle the foregoing challenges.

The commitments on the achievement of sustainable development are as thus, firstly, is to ensure that the rich diversity that is a collective strength will be used in the achievement of the set target of sustainable development; ensuring human solidarity, promotion of dialogue and cooperation among all without any sort of discrimination. Also, guaranteeing technology transfer, human resource development, education and training to eradicate underdevelopment. Equally to fight against all kinds of illicit practices and to ensure gender equity as part of agenda 21. More importantly, developed countries are to contribute to the development of the developing countries via assistance to the needs of those less developed countries. Participatory governance is recognized to be an ideal system of practice and there is need to ensure that countries are committed to such pattern for accountability and good governance at all levels (Animalu, Abdulahi and Adeoba, 2005).

There are three major components of sustainable development with which the success of any programme or project can be measured. They are as follows; economic, environmental and social dimensions. In other words, these are the triple bottom line (Rogers, Jalal and Boyd, 2008). Therefore, sustainable economic growth can occur when once there is a continuous increase in the Gross National Production (GNP) per capita without disruption by feedback from the environment factors and social impacts for a long period of time. Hence, poverty, population, pollution, participation, policy and market failures together with prevention and control of disasters are seen to be key factors governing current sustainable development (Rogers, Jalal and Boyd, 2008).

Finally, from the inception of sustainable development agenda, especially since United Nations conference on Environment and Development, sustainable development has remained difficult for African Countries to achieve. The major reason is that poverty has continued to ravage Africans and their actions negatively affects the environment. From the Malthusian era (1798) to Rio de Janeiro period (1992) and to Johannesburg (2002) that focused on population, environment, and environment and development respectively, there has been lack of assistance from the developed world based on the agreed commitments. Any assistance or aid to African and other developing countries do have string attachments in terms of financing from the external angle, knowing that it will be difficult for them (Developing Countries) to achieve sustainable development without a synergized effort of both the advanced and advancing countries that is required as a matter of necessity and of great importance. It is of necessity that the advanced countries assist the developing ones because environmental degradation and underdevelopment of the developing countries have contributory effects coming from the activities of the developed countries.

The tenets of globalization that is based on mutuality and liberalization of trade, boundless borders etc, should not be for profits or benefits alone to the North that is most advantaged but, equally should aid the less advantaged countries to strive towards development. Therefore, world summit on sustainable development should endeavour to ensure compliance on the commitments for the achievement of sustainable development in the world at large by the North - developed countries. Also, because of this Western origin, it appears a top-bottom agenda to Africans and measuring the benefits of it, so much goes to the west and the increased poverty still persist in the South-developing countries, it appears to be a mirage.

History and Geographical Location of Rivers State

Rivers State is one of the thirty six states of Nigeria. It has a population of about five million people (National Population commission, 2006). That qualifies it to be the sixth most populated state in Nigeria. Rivers State has the metropolitan city of Port Harcourt as its capital. The state is the economic heart-beat of oil industries and the 'Treasure Base' of the Nation.

Rivers State is bounded in the South by the Atlantic Ocean, in the North by Imo, Abia and Anambra States, in the east by Akwa-Ibom State and in the West by Bayelsa and Delta States. There are many indigenous ethnic and sub-ethnic groups that make up Rivers State. They include Ikwerre, Etche, Eleme, Ogoni, Okrika, Engeni, Kalabari, Ibani, Andoni and some others.

Rivers State, which is among the states in the Niger Delta, has its own river channels which comprise, New Calabar, Orashi, Bonny, Sombreiro and Bartholomew Rivers. Despite its many rivers, it equally has a large expanse of fertile land that has made it possible for inhabitants to engage in agricultural activities including fish-farming. Rivers State is also blessed with natural resources which include timber, white-sand, beaches, clay for ceramics, etc waiting to be explored and exploited (Rivers State Government, 2010). Rivers State presently is made up of twenty-three (23) Local Governments Areas with their various local administrations headed by chairmen and supported by their councilors. Each of the Local Government Areas has its own distinct headquarters that serves as the seat of power for that particular locality.

Economically, Rivers State has two refineries, two terminal seaports, an airport and lucrative industries mainly within the Port Harcourt metropolis. British colonist, Sir. Lord Frederick Lugard, administered the Nigerian territory and in 1913, and thus named the capital of Rivers State after Lewis Viscount Harcourt, secretary of state for the colonies (RSHA, 2014).

Interestingly, there are five tertiary institutions in the state, which include Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Rivers State University of Education, Rivers State College of Education, Rivers State College of Arts and Science, College of Education Technical and University of Port Harcourt.

Currently, there is an expansion of the capital city with a new name, known as Greater Port Harcourt City which covers vast hectares of land (Government of Rivers State of Nigeria, 2014). In addition, Rivers State economy has progressive expansion, starting from palm oil production to crude oil production of over 48% and 100% of the liquefied natural gas (Government of Rivers State of Nigeria, 2014). Also, the hydro-carbon industrial production attracts more earnings in the international market, for Nigerians it helps to degrade the environment (Government of Rivers State of Nigeria, 2014).

The retrospective situation is still feasible with regards to oil production that fluctuates incessantly. Conversely, although the discrepancy between the rural-urban and riverine - upland dichotomy has its effect on the political development of Rivers State, yet the situation remains the same (Okowa, 1989). In addition to the industrial oil production in Rivers State, the old tradition of fishing, farming, trading and the development of craft production improved the production processes that bettered the Rivers people and beyond (Erekosima, 1989).

Multinational Oil Companies Operations and Effects

Interestingly, the growth of Nigeria's economy has a lot to do with the industrial and oil productions in Rivers State. Nigeria with thirty-six states, federal capital territory and seven hundred and seventy-four local government areas, occupied by a large number of population with a declining GDP growth rate from 5.94% to 3.86% in the early part of 2015 portrays negative consequences on the people (Emejo, 2015). Again, the oil sector contribution to the nation's GDP has been on the negative at 8.15% resulting to a decline of 1.55% from 6.60% in early 2014 and 6.23% in later part of 2014. Whereas the non-oil sectors growth was by 5.59% in actual terms in the early part of 2015. This amounts to the Nigerian economy growing from 2.35% to 2.84% in the later part of 2015 in line with the previous report of 2.35% expansion made (Yekaterina, 2015).

Again, the activities of multinational oil companies in Rivers State has resulted to the high level of environmental degradation that goes to impoverish the Rivers people the more. (World Bank (2005) estimated the percentage of gas flaring in Nigeria to the high level of environmental degradation that goes to impoverish the Rivers people adversely. World Bank (2005) estimated the percentage of gas flaring in Nigeria to be about 75% considering the underdeveloped state of local market and infrastructure (UNDP, 2006); The gas flaring occurrence appears to be much more experienced in Rivers State than any other states in Nigeria considering the number of oil companies operating in the state.

Moreover, it is obvious that given the activities of the multinational oil companies operating in Rivers State in particular and Nigeria at large, whose owners are from the developed countries; the international community has a lot to do to salvage the poverty

situation in these societies and the entire developing countries. Measuring Universal poverty, it is argued that poverty is ravaging a greater number of the global population where 200 richest people own wealth amounts to US \$1 trillion that is worth more than the possessions of about 3 billion people (Cunningham, Cunningham and Saigo, 2005). Viewing the role of international community, World Bank is powerful in financing and formulation of policies that benefits developing countries. Out of \$25 billion loan annually given by multinational development banks, World Bank donates about two-third of the loan (Cunningham, Cunningham and Saigo, 2005).

Furthermore, gas flare effects on vegetation show that a typical flare clears the ground for a radius of 30 - 40 meters (Saro-Wiwa, 1992). The area fringing the "no life" zone has few birds and insects. Higher vegetation at a distance of one kilometer from the flare is either suppressed or damaged (Isichei et al, 1976). In the immediate gas flare zone, air, soil and leaf temperature increases within about 110 meters of the flare (Alapiki and Ohale, 2002). The micro-climate changes have adverse effects on the vegetation and fruit trees in the area, such as mango, oranges, guava and lemon (Oluwatimilehin, 1981). Gas flares are linked to acid rain - the flares produce the acid and other corrosive chemical compounds which fall and washes into the soil of the surrounding areas. It causes leaching of soil nutrients and crops in affected areas do poorly (Alapiki and Ohale, 2002). Izeogu (1983) notes that this kind of pollution has been linked to the rotting of cassava tubers, maize and other farm crops in flare zones. Also linked to the dwarfing of organs, mangoes and bananas in the affected communities. Ukegbu and Okeke (1987) empirically documented the impact of gas flare which was about 100% loss in yield in all crops cultivated about 200 meters away, 45% loss for those about 600 meters away, and 10% loss in yield for crops about 1000 meters from the flare. The microorganisms isolated within the study areas were all mesophiles, and the extent of impact was about 20 - 30% reduction in the bacterial species abundance and about 35 - 6% reduction in Fungi. The effects reduced with increasing distances from the flare. The air and soil temperature of the farms closest to the flare was abnormal. The high temperature and radiation intensity characteristics of the areas 200 meters from the flare accounted for the zero yield situation of crops cultivated within that zones. All these consequences of gas flaring has adverse effects on the wellbeing of the people that lands them into poverty and uneasy to escape from it.

Causes of Poverty

The major causes of poverty in a society are; adverse inequality caused by inadequate distribution of wealth and avenue of making money, unemployment that is on the high level which makes it difficult for individuals to have access to income in form of salaries, lack of access to education, lack of accessibility to good health-care system and unaffordability of such and lack of good drinking water that affects human health, lack of accessibility to credit facilities, discrimination within the society that culminates to social exclusion, etc. All the above and more are what lead to the powerlessness of the poor and the voicelessness because they lack the economic power and societal back-up to air their views.

Moreover, the poor resort to the environment for survival. This they do by going into agricultural production which they end up not being able to produce more than they can consume with little left overs to continue the next season. With no credit facilities to boost their agricultural production, even those in fish -farming business, the poor finds it very difficult

to escape from poverty, not to talk about conquering poverty. It is equally recognized that natural disasters such as floods, landslides/earthquakes, fire outbreak, sickness and disease, deaths of family members - most especially breadwinners and all kinds of accident comprising road, air, sea, rail etc. accidents pull an individual, families, etc down from their position to a lower ebb that equals to poverty. Also, elaborate ceremonies carried out by an average person with the intention to recover much from such occasion, which most atimes turns out negative, lands one into poverty. Such ceremonies like; elaborate wedding by new couples, elaborate burials, elaborate child dedications by beginners, elaborate birthday ceremonies and so on are capable of dragging one to an impoverished state.

Also, having many children with lots of extended family members and marrying more than the number of wives one (man) can take care of, are capable of impoverishing that particular person or family. "Over and above all, the attitudinal behavior of an individual goes a long way to determine whether he or she is to be poor or to be rich. It is glaring that the life style of an individual is a strong determinant of impoverishment over time or wealthy state" (Achinulo, 2015:177).

Poverty Alleviation Programmes In Rivers State

Rivers State has enunciated series of poverty alleviation programmes despite the ones formulated by federal government. Government responses to poverty at state, national and international levels reflect how serious the problem is and a realization of the implication of poverty eradication for sustainable (national and international) economic and political development. Poverty does not enhance sustainability in social and economic development. Politically, widespread poverty eventually leads to instability and slows the march to development and sustainable development.

Sustainable development will strive where most of the people live above poverty line. This will at least make such people generally immune to presenting themselves for hire for mere pittance as political thugs and miscreants who contribute to the insecurity of life and property which stands as another major problem in Rivers State currently. Economically, poverty leads to low productivity because it is capital that is used to generate more capital wealth must increase for one to be able to save and reinvest to further economic drive. At this point one is able to take care of basic economic needs and improve one's productivity. Neither instability nor low productivity (which also tend to reinforce each other) is supportive to sustainability. Sustainability has to do with continuity, maintenance and enduring intergenerational providence.

Rivers State has programmes for poverty alleviation as to be able to achieve sustainable development based on the impacts of the programmes on the people. The degree of the impacts will determine the level of self reliance of the people and less dependent on the programmes over time. Among the poverty alleviation programmes is the Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA) which emerged from a federal government poverty alleviation programme known as Rivers State Sustainable Development Programme (RSSDP). It was created to alleviate poverty, increase rural development and youth empowerment in 2008 (RSSDA Annual Report, 2010).

Furthermore, there is Rivers State Strategic Empowerment Scheme (RSSES) introduced by Governor Amaechi in 2008 specifically to reduce the sufferings the people and officially set it

up on the 14th June, 2013 (THE NATION. January 5,2014). The Scheme (RSSES) is to guarantee availability of funds to poor people of Rivers State and even to some extent to non indigenes residing in Rivers State. The sum of ten thousand naira (N 10,000.00) is to be paid to 200 persons/individuals in the 319 wards of the twenty-three (23) Local Government Areas of Rivers State representing a category. Another category of fifty individuals receive fifty thousand naira (N50,000.00) in each LGA of Rivers State with a consideration to Port Harcourt City LGA and Obio/Akpor LGA, for additional hundred individuals (THE NATION. January 5, 2014).

Moreover, Rivers State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (RIVSEEDS) is another important advancement process to alleviate the poor in Rivers State. The Rivers State government set it up with a projected target as the core values to ensure its achievement. Amongst the main objectives are the spirit of competitiveness, effectiveness and efficiency in entrepreneurship that cut across all categories of enterprises, consideration and fair treatment for the poor and physically challenged, enthrone ethnocentrism to validate our culture and tradition, enviable attitudinal behavior in service delivery that portrays good conduct and high level of rationality that inculcates discipline in our system -administrative system and political governance (RIVSEEDS, 2004).

In addition, there are rules and regulation guiding its operation as fundamental principles to ensure adherence of government in protecting the citizens with their possessions and guaranteeing their up keep; the state government have to ensure economic growth in continuation, progressively as to achieve sustainable development in Rivers State. Equally, there should be equity in the distribution of largess and whatever resources to effectively promote the standard of existence; ensuring universality in education and maintaining a patriotic, equitable and responsible mode of governance (RIVSEEDS, 2004).

Furthermore, there is a more ideal steps taken by Government of Rivers State to promote Education for all through the Education for all Scheme (EAS). This programme is so serious that officials are meant to monitor compliance and attendance. An instance was a case of Dame. Alice Lawrence -Nemi request for pupils absenteeism list with the intention to see their parents for commensurate punitive punishment (Ige, 2012). Also, there is Youths Empowerment Scheme (YES) equally introduced to take care of Rivers State youths and curtail the rate at which they indulge in activities that disrupts the peace and harmony of the entire Rivers society and rather turn productive to the growth of Rivers State economy and that of Nigeria at large.

Again, there are several microfinance institutions (MFI) whose activities in Nigeria generally have relatively seen to enable the poor to advance in their various life endeavour. Several financial institutions such as Rural Banking Programme (RBP), Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS), Nigerian Agricultural and Co-operative Bank Limited (NACB), The Community Banks (CBs), etc. for economic empowerment of the poor, employment generation and poverty reduction.

Most importantly, Rivers State Government established a fundamental agricultural farm to guarantee food security through Songhai Rivers State Development Initiative Farm (SRIF) which stand as the hub of agricultural production and development in Rivers State. The major essence of (SRIF) are to achieve sustainable agricultural production, Human capital building, technological park series and a profound service centre that started in 2010 (SRIF, 2010). In addition to all these, there are series of programmes initiated by the Rivers State government

to guarantee abundance of food, illumination of the state and good roads. Such programmes are; Massive Food production (MFP), Independent Power Projects (IPP) and Massive Road Construction and Rehabilitation (MRCR); meant to better the lives of Rivers people and others living in Rivers State to be beneficiaries as well (RIVSEEDS, 2004).

At a juncture, the wife of Dr. Odili, peter; Justice.Odili, Mary (Mrs.) in that particular dispensation of government introduced - The Adolescent Programme (TAP) specially meant to empower the middle-age citizens that are unemployed through skill acquisition. This was followed by another kind gesture by another governor's wife - Dame. Amaechi, Judith (Mrs.) who introduced Empowerment Support Initiative (ESI). Under this particular initiative, a lot of Rivers people benefited, more especially the physically challenged members of the Rivers State society. Several Skill Acquisition Programme (SAP) were introduced by the Rivers State Government to, at the end, empower those that have graduated. Equally, a special Taxi Scheme was introduced as an additional measure of uplifting the down trodden in the society.

On the Educational angle, Rivers State Government introduced Agency for Adult and Nonformal Education to take care of the increasing level of illiteracy in Rivers State (RIVSEEDS, 2004). More effort was made recently in Rivers State by the state government by employing more teachers to enhance learning by qualified teachers. Whereas, on the health care system in Rivers State given the statistics as at 2001 which stands or seem not to be adequate, Rivers State government initiated a new Health Care Delivery System (HCDS) to properly care for Rivers indigenes and some categories such as the elderly and the newly born. Records proof that there exist as at 2001, 545 private hospitals/clinics, 309 health care centres, 34 general hospitals with 3 specialized centres which are Neuro-Psychiatric Dental and Infectious disease control Hospitals (RIVSEEDS, 2004). Alongside in the process to ensure standard of living and well-being of Rivers State indigenes, one of the basic needs of life were not left out - that is Housing. Rivers State government reasonably initiated Housing and Urban Development Projects (HUDP) to ensure housing for all in Rivers State together, with good planning as to retain the status of the state as Garden City of Nigeria (RIVSEEDS, 2004).

Impacts of Rivers State Poverty Alleviation Programme

Aliyu, (2001) state poverty alleviation programmes employed about 214,367 people with a monthly allowance of N3,500.00. Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA) is meant to contribute immensely to ensuring attainment of sustainable development; for instance through human capital development which its objectives are the development of manpower and the building of capacity in the areas of education, skills development and health, so as to address some of the gaps in the current and future manpower needs of the state. The agency has been of good benefit to the Rivers people in so many ways such as undergraduate scholarship scheme to 70 beneficiaries on May, 4, 2009 to Canada to commence studies (RSSDA, 2010). Also, 100 beneficiaries was selected and sent to study information and communication technology (ICT) in Singapore compiled and master-minded by RSSDA (RSSDA, 2010).

Again, 104 men and women received training at the Songhai International Centre, in Porto Novo which RSSDA was incharge. Under the Governor's special Overseas Scholarship Programme under the auspices of RSSDA, more than 1,000 young men and women of all categories are studying in six countries which University of Liverpool, UK is among. Their

disciplines include medicine, engineering, ICT and geosciences (RSSDA, 2010). In Norway and Namibia, 80 Rivers State Youths received technical skills training in 2011 partnering with United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) (RSSDA, 2010). Back home in Rivers State, a Workmanship and Technical Training Centre (WTTC) located at Bori as a training institute specializes in fabrication, pipe fitting, welding, carpentry, masonry, tiling, catering, etc.

In collaboration with the Bonny Vocational Training Centre and City & Guilds of London for its programmes curriculum to ensure human capital development as one of the sure way of achieving sustainable development in Rivers State (RSSDA, 2010). Equally, under the Special Taxi Scheme (STS), the agency gave out 11 special designed taxis to 11 physically challenged Rivers State indigenes to improve their standard of living (RSSDA, 2010). RSSDA under its Agricultural Intervention Programme (AIP) is focused on achieving more than 247 direct employment and engaging more than 4,000 farmers as beneficiaries of the capacity building envisaged by the agency (RSSDA, 2010).

Moreover, the Songhai Rivers State Development Initiative (SRSDI) sent 105 Rivers State indigenes from all the 23 LGAs to Songhai International Centre (SIC) at Porto Novo for training. In return, they form the first set of workers in (SRIF) Songhai Rivers Initiative Farm. The key objectives of SRIF are fortified agricultural programme, improve the quality of man, establishment of a standard centre for Rivers State people, to widen Rivers State socioeconomic scope via radical agricultural production, to improve the techniques and tools/implements, to mitigate rural-urban migration and create a connection that will enhance Agro-tourism within and beyond (SRSDI, 2010), This makes it possible for SRIF to create not less than 200 employment opportunities, 1000 engaged farmers annually and 3000 affiliate farmers too. Commercialization of the centre attracts visitors, trainees and business people that makes up a population of more than 1000 people per day (SRSDI, 2010).

Furthermore, Rivers State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (RIVSEEDS) achieved a lot of milestone to encourage the zeal and quest for sustainable development in Rivers State. Looking at the basic need in life, it achieved constructing and apportioning more than 4,000 buildings to ameliorate and reduce the number of destitution and homelessness in the state. There is an improved health care system with concession for children less than 6yrs and men and women starting from 60yrs upward. A facelift to the school system to improve educational standard and ministry of environment to drastically reduce environmental degradation via implementation of the policies and monitoring operations of multinational companies and other agencies that operates in Rivers State. Roads and independent power generation have helped to adversely improve the life style and the living standard of the people (RIVSEEDS, 2004). In 2003 educational rating proofs Rivers State as one of the best in the country where the percentage of children between 6-11 years enrolment was 92%, with 96% of boys and 82% of girls (RIVSEEDS, 2004). In addition, Agency for Adult and Non-formal Education in Rivers State improved the female enrolment from 32% in 2001 to 43% in 2004; making it possible for illiteracy rate in the state to drop from 20.3% in 1991 to 7.2% in 2003 (RIVSEEDS, 2004). Also, analysis of enrolment increase in primary schools between 2010/2011 session and that of 2011/2012 session shows that the total was 244,684 and 258,790 respectively with a difference of 14,106, implying a decrease in illiteracy level (RSUBE, 2012).

On the other hand, considering the increasing percentage of youth population in Rivers State, state skills acquisition factory has to be used to provide employment for more than 1,000 youths. This was achieved through the intervention of ministry of youth, Empowerment and Employment Generation. With the provision of N20m empowerment fund for youth/women, a total of 8658 youths were trained in different schemes (RIVSEEDS, 2004). Equally, series of accomplishments were done to upgrade agricultural production by the provision of 13,800 bags of NPK fertilizers to farmers in the state, oil palm programme was broadened, treatment of above one million dogs, distribution of both instruments and equipments to farmers and fishermen respectively, inspection of over 80,000 livestock meant to be slaughtered in abattoirs (RIVSEEDS, 2004).

Finally, Micro Finance Banks are meant to provide an accessible fund for the small scale business men and women to enable them improve in their various businesses. These category of people includes; traders, small skill operators in the market such as grinders, etc, vulcanizers, hair dressers and barbers, small communication operators such as GSM phone and recharge card operators, seamstress, basket producers, mechanics of both motor and motor-cycles, cottage shop operators, fruit sellers, etc. The fund available as at 2004 was N28.8 billion which only N8.5 billion had been made accessible to these small scale business men and women provided by Small and Medium Enterprises Equity Investment Scheme (SMEEIS), the less accessibility of the fund caused by corruption and misappropriation of fund resulted to less empowerment of those targeted beneficiaries (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2005). The Adolescent Programme (TAP) trained and empowered a lot of people that indulge in the training in Rivers State, although, politicians and those incharge used that opportunity to patronize their supporters and relatives.

Ensuring Sustainable Development in Rivers State

To ensure the achievement of sustainable development in Rivers State in particular and Nigeria at large, there is need to curb those factors, challenges and constraints on any poverty alleviation programme. The fact of their being introduced by the Federal Government, in terms of the national poverty alleviation programmes such as National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), etc; and then imposed on the lower tiers of government itself constitutes a problem. These other tiers of government were not consulted to make input into the preparation of these programmes. This has resulted to formulation of programmes that end up failing, because they cannot actually address the challenges of the people whom it was meant for. Moreover, the situation it was meant to resolve keep getting worst every day, poverty instead of declining, is on the increase and such a deplorable condition hinders any strive to achieve sustainable development especially in Rivers State.

Furthermore, to guarantee the achievement of sustainable development in Rivers State taking cognizance of the local conditions, there is need to take into consideration the Niger Delta environment which need to be studied before the programmes are to be introduced. The possibility is high that these programmes were imposed from above and are very likely to run counter to the local culture and needs, thereby have little or no impact on the people generally.

On the other hand, poverty alleviations in Rivers State such as Youths Empowerment Schemes (YES), Micro Finance Institutions (MFI), Skill Acquisition Programme (SAP), The Adolescent Programme (TAP), Empowerment Support Initiative (ESI), Songhai Rivers Initiative Farm (SRIF), Rivers State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (RIVSEEDS), Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA), etc. have also been facing challenges based on corruption, lack of accountability and transparency, etc. They are meant to contribute immensely to ensuring achievement of sustainable development in Rivers State. However, most of the mechanisms for enforcing these rules such as parliament, the courts, Agencies and the like are ineffective and are not independent/autonomous. Again, due to the problem that corruption has posed to various developmental programmes, it becomes imperative to see how it has retarded the success of many poverty alleviation programmes initiated by government to ensure the attainment of sustainable development. The excessive political interference by the political actors who are interested in appropriating part of the funds meant for poverty alleviation programmes with the intention to mar the efforts and the ineffective targeting of the poor people leading to benefits by unintended beneficiaries, stand as a major constraint that hinders the poverty alleviation programmes from adequately reaching the set targets. This culminates to the yearning for more funds to enhance the programmes and proper implementation process guarded by good monitoring mechanism.

Interestingly, one should be mindful of the state of Nigerian economy which has been made worse by the taste for foreign goods. This situation has stifled the productivity of the local industries and factories whose products cannot compete with the foreign goods. The outcome of this situation is not encouraging on the side of local factories/industries production level. The result is affecting Nigeria's economic growth and poverty increase that constraints the strive to achieve a sustainable development. The result is worsening poverty as the local economy cannot produce and the impact on sustainable development has become negative.

Finally, there is also the challenge faced on the part of the initiators and operators of these programmes. The poverty alleviation programmes in Rivers State as highlighted earlier have initiated a lot of projects in virtually all the rural areas of Rivers State such as boreholes, generators, vehicles for transportation, skill acquisition centres, soft loans, scholarships for education, etc. but these projects turned out to be unsustainable as they could not be maintained, and before long became relics of the past. Despite the existence of these policies to alleviate poverty and achievement of sustainable development in Rivers State, the various challenges faced in the cause of formulation and implementation of these policies stand as the constraint to the achievement of the set target. Therefore, to ensure the achievement of sustainable development in Rivers State, those challenges and constraints must be addressed. This is inevitable because if not checked, the failure of these programmes continues and worsen the poverty situation in Rivers State, in which adversely will continue to affect sustainable development in the state. A lot of impacts have been felt by Rivers State people from the plethora of poverty alleviation programmes in the state, so far but, not commensurate to the resources involved, therefore, there is need for more and their sustainability is very necessary.

Conclusion

In every society, its operations determines the type of policies to formulate. This is so because a good political system carries everybody along and formulates policies and make decisions that is beneficial to all (Cunningham, Cunningham and Saigo, 2005) Rivers State government is trying to ensure better standard of living that will amount to quality of life for its people hence, the formulation of series of poverty alleviation programmes by different government dispensation considering the resources in the zone. The poverty level goes to explain why unrest and frustration among people are so evident. This situation has resulted to so many activities that degrade the environment together with the struggle to survive and it has caused all the effort to achieve sustainable development in Rivers State to fail meeting the set target.

Moreover, globally, poverty alleviation and sustainable development are seen as urgent concerns. This is the reason why high priority which pro-poor policies attract in different nations, being sponsored by international organizations such as the World Bank and other United Nations Agencies is necessary. However, seeing that "poverty is the shortage of the prerequisites of life and the unaffordability of the basic need of life existence" (Achinulo, 2015), it is a precarious situation that is hopeless which can sometimes be temporary or in perpetuity depending on the system of governance that is in operation within that particular society. Some features are considered peculiar to the poor which include; living in an area that has deplorable roads, those who farm food crops for subsistence, highly vulnerable and insecure set of people, those who lack accessibility to finance, quality houses and quality clothings, those who engage in manual labour and who cannot afford quality education for themselves and their children, together with families championed by female folks-single parent and widows who are prone to poverty (Okunmadewa, 1997). Equally, it is glaring that some factors are responsible for the increase of poverty in the society which include; poor social service delivery in terms of education, health care system, good water and bad governance, lack of technological advancement, poor management of resources, etc.

Finally, realizing that poverty alleviation are those measures, programmes, strategies, etc, put in place to ensure a better standard of living for human being, it is imperative to strictly implement them to ensure it gets to the targeted beneficiaries. It is concerned with better welfare that will alleviate the poor from the lower ebb of poverty to enjoy quality existence. Therefore, policies and programmes are to be formulated in consideration of the challenges and hindrances that will tend to constraint the achievement of sustainable development in Rivers State. In spite of other factors, sustainable development will only be possible when there is a gross decline at the level of poverty.

Recommendation

Retrospectively and currently, there has always been clarion call for drastic reduction of the level of poverty in all the societies in the world, hence the call for sustainable development globally. Therefore, it is pertinent to recommend as follows:

- There should be a continuity of any poverty alleviation programme in the state because its sustainability will definitely emancipate majority of the population out of poverty which will guarantee and ensure achievement of sustainable development.
- There is need for participatory decision's making and policy formulations for holistic impact geared towards the achievement of the targeted objectives.

- Imposition of poverty alleviation programmes from federal government unto other tiers of government: is absurd and should stop rather; local conditions have to be looked into prior to any poverty alleviation programme formulations. This will help to address those challenges faced by such local area and improve their living standard.
- A monitoring committee is needed to checkmate the level of corruption that results to abandonment of the programmes as relics of the past.
- Government of Rivers State should categorically state the punitive punishment awaiting defaulters in the course of implementing these programmes without being accountable and transparent on how funds were spent and programmes run.
- There is need to engage rural people in a meaningful productive venture to reduce poverty.
- The environmental impact assessment agency should be more serious to mitigate the level at which environmental degradation occurs by monitoring and bringing to book those responsible. Also, ensuring that adequate punishment/fines are leveled against those found culpable to serve as a deterrent to others.
- The government of Rivers State should equally have a radical innovative committee with a novel idea of monitoring to ensure that those poverty stricken people that benefited from any of the programme are being monitored to avert extravagant life style that is capable of dragging them back to the poverty state by carrying out annual evaluation of the beneficiaries.
- There is need to give a proper orientation on the dimensions of corruption and how to curb it. Incentives should be put in place for those beneficiaries of the programmes that improved from their poverty state and try to escape from it. This will go a long way to increase the percentage of those who escape from poverty; because they will strive more to be a partaker in the incentive largesse set aside by state government for the qualifiers.
- There should be a law in Rivers State on compulsory education for all, to create the awareness and the understanding about the role of good and healthy environment on every society. With the realization, there will be desire to protect the environment and maintain the Rivers State status of Garden City.

In all, putting the above recommendations into practice will guarantee a progressive and continuous development that will provide for the present and upcoming generations equitably in Rivers State of Nigeria.

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