

SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES

Manuscript info:

Received December 18, 2018., Accepted December 22, 2018., Published February 20, 2019.

POVERTY ALLEVIATION STRATEGIES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN NIGERIA AND MALAYSIA

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.26739/2573-5616-2019-1-4>

Abstract: Over the years there has been proliferation of poverty alleviation strategies aimed at reducing poverty in Nigeria this strategies include Operation feed Nation (OFN),Green Revolution, Compulsory primary education, Low Cost Housing, River Basin Authority, (RBDA),National Agricultural Land Development Authority, Agricultural Development Programme, Agricultural Credit Scheme, Strategic Grain Reserve Programme, Rural Electrification Scheme, Rural Banking Programme in the 1970s to 1980,while from 1990 to date such strategies include Better Life, Family Support, Child Care Trust, People's Bank, National Poverty Eradication Programme. Despite the effort of successive governments in formulating and implementing these policy the menace of poverty is still in the it defied all government effort in combating poverty execution, while in Malaysia the fight against poverty successful for instance from 1970 to 2002 Malaysia was able to reduced level from 50% to 5.1% whereas in Nigeria the level rose to 62% in 2015 from 42% in 1980.What could have been the reason failure in Nigeria is not far from due to policy inconsistency, corruption ,bad governance. This paper argue that to achieve povertyalleviation effort there should be political willfrom the side the side of the government officials as well as policy continuity as panacea to poverty alleviation reduction.

Key words: Poverty, Strategy, Continuity, Corruption.

Recommended citation: Salisu Ahmed Kabiru, Rozita Arshad. POVERTY ALLEVIATION STRATEGIES:A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN NIGERIA AND MALAYSIA. 1-2. American Journal of Research P. 27-38 (2019).

1.1 Introduction

Poverty reduction in the world is so paramount and topical that it occupied a front burner. Every responsible government all over the globe sees it as an obligation to its citizen to attempt to reduce poverty.

Consequent upon this, various governments and development donors at different regions embark on programmes aimed at reducing poverty to a tolerable level. The United Nation millennium Goals was articulated toward reducing

poverty and other problems that retard development such as hunger, illiteracy, environmental degradation, prevalence of diseases, and gender inequality (Asraf, 2014).

The United nation intend to millennium development submit in 2000 looked at issues of poverty distribution worldwide and set a target of eradicating them in 2015, it aims at reducing poverty by half of the number of people living on less than a dollar per day, providing safe water for fifty percent of the people deprived of such access, primary education for all children and revising the spread of diseases such as malaria, Aids, improving the living condition of the rural people and a greater access to modern technology for poorer nation was also included in the target. Worthy of note is the fact that poverty is not only lack of basic needs such as food, shelter and schooling but rather it is also the deprivation of individual from participation active social and economic activities in the society which demoralized the individual mentally and physically.

In Nigeria there have been several attempts at poverty alleviation and economic empowerment of the citizenry at different period from 1970 to date. Previous attempt at poverty reduction include Operation Feed Nation, National Direction for Employment, Better Life, Family Support, Child Care Trust, People's Bank, National Poverty Eradication Programme all aimed at reducing poverty.

Despite all these strategies, the

rate of poverty keep on rising defying all government efforts at reducing the poverty which prompt this paper to this pertinent question that why have all the anti-poverty programmes in Nigeria failed to address poverty pandemic problem, how could poverty situation in Nigeria be tackled effectively, why Malaysia was able to tackled poverty problem from 50% in 1970 to 5.1% in 2002.

It is on this background that this study seeks to compare the strategies of poverty alleviation programmes of both Nigeria and Malaysia with the aim learning from their experience. The paper utilizes secondary sources of data and analytical method of data analysis. The problem highlighted was despite the numerous programmes and strategies formulated and implemented by the successive governments in Nigeria, the poverty level has been in rise defying all previous effort of eradicating it whereas Malaysia has achieve a substantial success in converting poverty from 50% in 1970 to 5.1 in 2002, and 3.8 in 2015.

1.2 Literature Review

Generally, poverty refers to the inability to attain minimum standard of living. It is a social condition characterized by the inadequacy of access to basic human needs (food and non-food) for the sustenance of socially acceptable minimum standard of living in a given society. Some of these basic determinants of well-being among others are: adequate food, shelter, potable

water, health care, education and employment opportunity. As access to most of these facilities is largely market determined, income or disposable resources available to individuals or households invariably determine who has what. A household or individual without enough income to meet the minimum levels of these needs in a given society is generally said to be poor. (Pius, 2015). Poverty can be classified into absolute and relative poverty,

Poverty is general scarcity, dearth, or the state of one who lacks a certain amount of material possessions or money. It is a multifaceted concept, which includes social, economic, and political elements.

United Nation conceived poverty as inability of having 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 clothe 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 in marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation.

World Bank defined poverty from deprivation point of view which centers on well-being, and comprises many dimensions. It

includes low incomes and the inability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity. Poverty also encompasses low levels of health and education, poor access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate physical security, lack of voice, and insufficient capacity and opportunity to better one's life.

Copenhagen Declaration define absolute poverty as a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to social services. The term 'absolute poverty' is sometimes synonymously referred to as 'extreme poverty. The World Bank defined the new international absolute poverty line as \$1.25 a day in 2008 for 2005 (equivalent to \$1.00 a day in 1996 US prices. In October 2015, they reset it to \$1.90 a day. Women are the group suffering from the highest rate of poverty after children; 14.5% of women and 22% of children are poor in the United States.

Poverty is global phenomenon that need to be tackle and eradicated globally, for instance The World Bank forecasts that 702.1 million people were living in extreme poverty in 2015, down from 1.75 billion in 1990. Of these, about 347.1 million people lived in Sub-Saharan Africa 35.2% of the population, and 231.3 million lived in South Asia 13.5% of the population. Between 1990 and 2015, the percentage of

the world's population living in extreme poverty fell from 37.1% to 9.6%, falling below 10% for the first time. Nevertheless, given the current economic model, built on GDP, it would take 100 years to bring the world's poorest up to the previous poverty line of \$1.25 a day. (UN,2011).

Extreme poverty is a global challenge, it is observed in all parts of the world, including developed economies. Africa is the world's continents considered to be in either absolute or relative poverty, Africa is the most glaring, especially sub-Saharan African countries where, averages, 45 to 50 percent of the people live below the poverty line (Ihugba,2014). These countries are characterized with features such as overcrowded settlements in major urban areas without basic social services, remote, and isolated rural settlements. The World Bank Report (1997) estimated that 50 percent of the poor people in sub-Saharan Africa come from Nigeria and other East African countries - Ethiopia, Somalia, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda. Out of the population in absolute poverty in Nigeria, more than 75 percent are estimated to live in rural areas (Anyanwu,2013).

Previous studies on poverty reveals that using single approach to reducing poverty does not always yield the desired result, for example one study reveals that while microcredit is successful at reaching the poor, it is less successful at reaching the vulnerable poor (Amin, Rai and Topa, 2003). The results of this study also suggest that microcredit is unsuccessful at reaching the group most prone to destitution or the vulnerable poor. This finding indicates that participation of the destitute in microfinance program is still in unsatisfactory level which warrants further attention in order to alleviate rural hard core poverty in Bangladesh (Amin, Rai and Topa, 2003).

There is different opinion that microcredit often improves the capacity of households' risk management capacity through the enhancement of social capital. This is partly achieved by deliberate training and capacity-building efforts and partly through fungibility of loan proceeds into the building up of social networks (Mosley and Rock, 2004). This, in turn, may lead to 'poverty externalities' through the extension of credit groups to include poor people and through the stabilization of rural income, to reduce the vulnerability of the poorest to risk.

However, other studies show that microfinance program participants do not benefit in terms of greater level of consumption, but they participate because they benefit from risk reduction by diverting the funds from investing in microenterprises to consumption (Yuge, 2011). While in Nigeria Van de Walle(2001) for example carried a study on poverty alleviation in Nigeria where the study suggested that the satisfaction of basic needs directly alleviate some of the most severe consequences of poverty. The study contended that healthy, well-nourished and educated individuals obviously have a higher standard of living than sick, hungry and ignorant individuals.

The study therefore suggested investment in human capital and involvement of the poor in the growth process. Similarly, World Bank carried out a study in 1996 on poverty in Nigeria and the study revealed that poverty is more pronounced in the rural area, it also revealed that the southern part of Nigeria had less poverty than either the central or northern part of the country

3.1 An overview of poverty alleviation programme in Nigeria and Malaysia

Nigeria is a federal republican state with a presidential system of Government as enshrined in the federal constitution of 1999. Nigeria consists of 36 states plus the federal capital territory and has 774 local authorities. Nigeria has a land that measures 924,000 Square Kilometers (357,000 Square Miles) stretching between Cameroon to the East, Benin to the West, Niger and Chad to the North on the west coast of Africa. According to 1960 census Nigeria's population was 56 million, in 1988 census the population was 88 million people and in the last census of 2006 the population stands at 140 million, while the population is projected to be 188 million by 2014 (NBS 2014).

Nigerian GDP growth is 478.5 bn in 2013 and ranked 31 in the world, GDP real growth rate is 6.2% and ranked 35 in the world, Gross national saving 15.5% and ranked 106 in the world. GDP composition household consumption, Government 12.8%, Investment in fixed capital 9.8%, Investment in inventory 0%, export of goods and services 49.9%, Import of goods and services 22.8%. GDP composition Agriculture 30.9%, Industries 43%, Services 26% in 2012 estimate. Phone users 112.78 million in 2012, 70 federal and state broadcasting media across all the 36 states, 40 state government own radio, 20 private own, internet users 43.989 million in 2009 ranked 9th in the world, Airports 27, Railways 3,505 KM, Roadways 193,200,54, Waterways 8,600 KM ranked 15 in the world, merchant marine 89 ranked 54 in the world, Ports and terminal Lagos, and Calabar, Military manpower 37,087,711 female and 35,232 male 2012 estimate.

Poverty alleviation programmes of the 1970 through to 80s were not designed to fight poverty directly but rather they were designed to develop rural areas via agricultural development strategies which in turn its hope will empower the rural people and by extension reduced their poverty level. This strategies includes: Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution, Compulsory primary education, Low Cost Housing, River Basin Authority, RBDA), National Agricultural Land Development Authority, Agricultural Development Programme, Agricultural Credit Scheme, Strategic Grain Reserve Programme, Rural Electrification Scheme, Rural Banking Programme.

The programmes that follows the 1980s were more directly related to fighting poverty such programmes include: Directorate for Food, Road,

and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Better Life Programme, People's Bank of Nigeria, Community Bank Programme, Family Support Programme (FSP), Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) (Garba,2006).Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP),Poverty Eradication Programme (PEP), Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES),Rural Infrastructure Scheme (RIDS), Social Welfare Service Scheme (SOWSS) (Omotola, 2008). Accordingly, Oroegbu (2009) argue that these programmes yielded minimal unsatisfactory result as the poor were wrongly targeted and this continue to be a problem up to dates as data from NBS has shown that instead of reducing poverty the poverty level has been in the rise, for example in 1980 the rate of poverty stood at 28.1 %, and in 1989 it stood at 37%, it rose to 60% in 1995,while in 2010 it stood at 68%, and in 2014 it stood at 62% after declining from the previous year then it rose to 70% in 2015.Similarly, according to UNDP report of 2010,poor quality of governance in Nigeria was among the other reasons for poverty reduction programmes failures.Oshewolo (2008) opined that political at all levels hampers the fight against poverty reduction, alsoAdesopo (2009) argue that politics of poverty reduction remains another challenge as those who are saddled with the responsibility alleviating poverty are

not poor and this is probable cause of the problem in identifying the need of the poor.

Malaysian is located in the Southeast Asia and it operates a federal constitutional monarchy, it consists of thirteen states and three federal territories and has a total landmass of 330,803 square kilometres, and 127,720 square, separated by the South China Sea into two similarly sized regions, Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia (Malaysian Borneo). Peninsular Malaysia shares a land and maritime border with Thailand and maritime borders with SingaporeVietnam, and Indonesia. East Malaysia shares land and maritime borders with Brunei and Indonesia and a maritime border with the Philippines and Vietnam.With a population of over 30 million, Malaysia is the 44th most populous country in the world.

Malaysia has had one of the best economic records in Asia, with its GDP growing at an average of 6.5% per annum for almost 50 years. However, over the years successive government have not been lacking initiating policies and programmes, but implementing those policies to the core is a challenge to realization of programme objectives (Ijere, 2011).For example policies like Green revolution, Operation Feed the Nation, Better life Programme and DFFR by successive government were initiated by, but abandoned half way.Policy somersault is another big challenge that faces Nigeria, for instance in

the education sector the Policy somersault had been the bane of development in the country as it led to policy failure. Eboh& Keiser 2011).

While Nigeria had numerous poverty alleviation programmes from 1970 to date, on the other hand Malaysia had only one programme on poverty alleviation from 1971 to 2002 which was the New Economic Policy (NEP) introduced in 1971 to eradicate poverty, but in 2002 after the accomplishment of NEP a new programme was introduced the National Development Policy (NDP) under the NDP a Programme for the Hardcore Poor (PPRT) department was created to concentrate solely on hardcore poor.

Poverty in Malaysia is measured by the Poverty Line Index (PLI). The Poverty Line Index (PLI) for Malaysia was introduced in June 1977 using the 1973 Household Expenditure Survey (HES). The incidence of poverty and hardcore poor in Malaysia has dramatically declined from 1970 to 2002. Over the period, poverty incidence has dropped from 52.4 per cent to 5.1 per cent, a reduction of about 47.3 per cent in 30 years. The number of poor households decreased from 1.6 million in 1970 to about 574,000 in 1990 and 267,000 in 2002. Poverty incidence in the rural areas has also been on the down trend from 60 per cent in 1970 to 11.4 per cent in 2002. Urban poverty is relatively lower, falling from 22.3 per cent in 1970 to 2 per cent in 2002(Hatta, 2013).

The decline in poverty incidence was significantly contributed by high and sustained economic growth during the period, which averaged 6-7 per cent annually. This factor provided ample opportunities for job and business creation for the population. The poor have benefited from changes in the sources of household income. This includes an increasing portion of non-farm income and remittance from family members working in urban centres and industrial areas.

Another factor that contributed to the declining incidence of poverty is the poverty eradication programme, which has been the major objective of the government since the commencement of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1971. During the period of the NEP from 1971 to 1990, there was a major focus on reduction in poverty and income disparities between ethnic groups, particularly by elevating the position of the Bumiputera. The assault on the poverty has taken the forms of specific programmes for poverty reduction, directed to specific target groups such as padi farmers, rubber smallholders, coconut smallholders, fishermen, estate workers, agricultural laborers and indigenous groups.(Hatta, 2013).

At the end of the NEP era, the government has switched to the National Development Policy (NDP). Under the NDP the government has established a special Development Programme for the Hardcore Poor (PPRT), which

incorporates a package of economic, social, housing and provision of basic amenities. The government has also recognized the importance of the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the overall policy framework to eradicate poverty. In particular, it has supported the microfinance activities of AmanahIkhtiar Malaysia (AIM) as an integral part of its poverty programmes. AIM, modelled on the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, is the first NGO aimed at poverty alleviation in the country. The establishment of AIM was for the sole purpose of assisting hard-core poor households to lift themselves out of poverty regardless of gender, race or political affiliation. (Shirazi, 2014).

Poverty alleviation strategies and programmes in Malaysia have been acclaimed as a success by United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) in its report on Malaysia Achieving The Millennium Development Goals Success and Challenges. Although the incidence of poverty has been reduced, many problems and challenges still exist especially in the urban area. New forms of poverty, which include single female headed households, the rural elderly, unskilled workers and migrant workers, have also emerged in the country as a result of rapid economic growth and the development process itself. All indications are that, the eradication of poverty will continue to be one of the main items in the national agenda to ensure that the poor are

not to be left behind. (Hashim, 1998).

3.0 Factors Responsible for the Success and Failure of Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Nigeria and Malaysia

3.1 Policy Continuity

Policy inconsistency or somersault has been identified as one of the problem hampering the achievement most policy target in Nigeria. Frequent change of governments which led to subsequent change in policies in Nigeria was among the factor that causes policy failure, because for a policy to succeed there has to be continuity in the policy (Oyewole, 2015). For instance while Nigeria had seven successive regime from 1970 to 1999 all with different on poverty while on the other hand Malaysia had only one regime and has only one policy on poverty eradication at the same period.

3.2 Political Will

Although several regimes had initiated several policy responses in the past to address the poverty plague in Nigeria. These policies and efforts have not yielded the desired results of alleviating poverty because they were only declarative without concerted effort and lacked the required political will among several other causes. This evidence as most poverty alleviation programmes often attract meager federal budgetary allocations and to a great extent show government's under-estimation of the problem. While the Nigerian political leaders lack political will in executing public

policy their Malaysian are well committed to every policy they formulated and sufficient fund is allocated to see that the policy achieve the desire result.

3.3 Public Private Partnership

In Nigeria poverty eradication is viewed as sole government responsibilities with very little or no role for the private and non-governmental actors. Recent studies on poverty eradication indicate private sector both for profit oriented and non-profit oriented internationally and locally can collaborate in poverty alleviation. Rodrik (2004) argue that collaborative effort between government, private and the NGOs has increasingly been recognized as the effective strategies in tackling poverty and other development related issues. The success of Malaysia in eradication poverty to a very low level of 3.8% was largely due to the involvement of private sector in the fight against poverty.

3.4 Corruption Challenge

Corruption in Nigeria is of aserious concern because it has succeeded over the years in neutralizing the efforts of all stakeholders aimed at the eradication of poverty and hunger in Nigeria. Most of therevenue committed to this course hardly gets to the target audience while the campaign for poverty eradication had been without the needed political will. The wealth of written materials on corruption in Nigeria is adequate to convince an outsider that the phenomenon is widespread (Onyebuchi, U. (2012).

For example Transparency International. Transparency International, the global coalition against corruption ranked Nigeria from the top meaning that, from the first most corrupt nation in the world Nigeria is 27 in 2012, 25 in 2013, 27 in 2014 and 26 in 2015 respectively. In contrary Malaysia is ranked among least country in the world by the International organization. While Malaysia was ranked 49 in 2012, 50 in 2013, 52 in 2014, 50 in 2015. The relative level of corruption is one of the factor that contributed immensely their poverty eradication success.

3.5 Good Governance

According to Nkom (2007) the search for Good Governance seems to be Nigerian most urgent need at this material time. Most Nigerian believed very strongly that bad Governance is one of factor which crippled the country's development in virtually every aspect of human endeavor. Good Governance deal with how those who have the authority of the state make effort to achieve the goals or end of the state, the maintenance of law and order, and the provision of welfare for its citizen and the pursuit of the nation interest in the global arena. Western democracy insists that Good Governance entails the existence of democratic institutions and values (Joshua, 2013).

Governance is ultimately concern with creating condition for ordered rule and collective action, it is all about creating a new mechanism that goes beyond direct provision of

services to a sensible and effective use of wider range of tools as well as different institution for the attainment of a societal goal.

Good governance must also be entrenched with zero tolerance for corruption, promote true participatory democracy, and rule of law in which justice will be seen to be available and accessible by all irrespective their creed or ethnic affiliation (Belfut, 2014). Good Governance requires responsible and responsive political leaders at the grassroots, these leaders must only be elected but also be held accountable for their action by the electorate (Weiss, 2000). Nigeria lack governance because most of the government institutions are not autonomous to carry on developmental work without undue interference from the government officials whereas in Malaysia the practice of governance has instituted and is working well which that help in achieving state objective such as poverty reduction.

4. Conclusion

Despite the endowment of the nation in terms of human and mineral resources and an increase in GDP that does not translate to poverty reduction in the country as indicators of poverty level in the nation is been on the rise from 49 % in 1980 to 70% in the 2015. Even

though successive Nigerian governments have made several commendable efforts aimed at the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger through its various initiatives, incidence of poverty in Nigeria is defying all efforts which call for a new approach to poverty eradication strategy that will curtail the menace of poverty in the country for stability and national development. This paper argue that there is a lot to learn from Malaysian experience and adopt to our country in order to eradicate poverty in the country.

5. Recommendation

F There should be a mechanism that will ensure continuity of policy whether the government that formulate the policy is in power not.

F There should be promotion of good governance practices which promotes true democracy, and rule of law in which government will seen as a facilitator of conducive environment for development effort for both private, public and NGOs

F The present anti-craft commissions ICPC and EFCC should merge together to make more effective in fighting corruption.

F Malaysian Model of poverty strategy should be imitated and modify to suit our situation in alleviating poverty in Nigeria.

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