

# Management of National Social Investment Programme and Poverty Reduction in Nigeria, 2016-2022.

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## Abstract

*The creation of the ministry of humanitarian affairs and disaster management came with high expectations that it would help curtail extreme poverty among vulnerable population in Nigeria. However, the rising level of poverty in Nigeria is worrisome, it appears to have dashed this expectation. Thus, our study investigated the management of National Social Investment Programme and poverty reduction in Nigeria with a view to unravelling factors responsible for perceived poor performance of the programme. We adopted interview and rapid review of documents for data collection. Data were analysed using content analysis. The study was anchored on the theory of post-colonial State as our analytical framework, it argued that National Social Investment programme grossly underperformed its poverty reduction objective due to lack of good governance especially that which has to do with accountability in the management of social investment programmes hence, corruption has pervaded the operation of this programme, the implication of this findings is that the programme should involve vulnerable population in the decision making level. We recommended stronger institutions and mechanisms to checkmate the activities of corrupt officials in the management of Social Investment Programmes in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** social welfare programme, poverty reduction, vulnerable population, accountability, Nigeria.

## Introduction

For over three decades, there has been a mounting scourge of poverty in Nigeria. It began with the adoption of Structural Adjustment Programme \*SAP) in 1986 with a persuasion for weekly devaluation of our currency (Omakoji, 2019). People could neither invest in farm, produce goods, nor build factory to create jobs this is because interest rate went up. This triggered poverty and misery. The level of poverty in Nigeria is so alarming to the extent that Nigeria has been described as poverty capital of the world (Rewane, 2021). This unfortunate

description is as a result of the fact that, extreme poverty has become pervasive, having overtaken India in poverty rating. Records shows that 133 million Nigerians are living in extreme poverty, surviving on less than US\$2 a day.

According to the World Data Lab of 2017, this grows by six people every minute (Onah and Charles, 2019). People could barely feed three square meals a day, there is a lack of basic education, healthcare services and most often, people die of maternal mortality among others. According to Peng (2011), neoliberal economic policies adopted by many developed and developing countries in the 80s heralded the era of poverty in Nigeria because it involved retrenchments, spending cuts, liberalisation, privatisation of government services, removal of subsidies and deregulation and inward foreign direct investment.

There is difficulty in adopting a universal definition of poverty because of its multi-dimensional nature; however, we shall attempt a triangulation of typical examples of economic and statistical definitions given by the World Bank and some accredited scholars. Statistically, the World Bank define poverty as any income below US\$1.25 a day for the poorest countries and US\$2 a day for poor developing countries (Ravallian, 2003). Economically, poverty is a situation in which people live on less than a specified minimum income level, therefore, are unable to provide for the necessities of life required for an acceptable standard of living (Taiwo & Agwu, 2016).

Poverty manifest in various forms, including “hunger and malnutrition, ill-health, high morbidity and mortality, homelessness or inadequate housing, unsafe living conditions, social discrimination and exclusion” (Onuoha, 2010). It is characterized by the lack of opportunities to participate in decision-making and in civil and socio-cultural affairs (United Nations, 2007) (as cited in Onuoha, 2010). Poverty reduction therefore, involves the equilibrating process of equitable distribution of resources, empowering the people to live a decent live, providing affordable basic education, healthcare services and improving standard of living. Hence, the growing recognition that hinges on the understanding that providing social welfare services holds the key to the varieties of problems of poverty.

The European Commission defines SIP as the set of policy measures that promote investment in human capital for the improvement of people’s ability to participate fully in socio-economic life as well as in the labour market in order to achieve shared prosperity (Boughet et al, 2015). NSIP therefore, refers to a social welfare initiative created by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2016 under the directorate of the National Social Investment office in a bid to reduce poverty, hunger and unemployment.

According to World Bank, (2019) and UNDP as reported in This Day newspaper (2009), approximately two third majority of the world's population are impoverished and over 70% of Nigeria's population live in extreme poverty hence, various military and civilian administration in Nigeria have made effort at cushioning the pangs of poverty by adopting policies that would reduce it. For instance, Obasanjo military regime introduced the Agricultural guarantee scheme and River Basin development Authority (AGRSRDA), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) on 6th January 1986. National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in 1986, Better Life Programme (BLP) for rural women by the then first lady, Mrs. Maryam Babangida in 1987. National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) of 2001, National Economic Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS) of March 4 2004-2007. Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P etc. (Obiagu, 2017).

### **National Social Investment Programme and poverty Reduction**

There is a growing recognition that hinges on the understanding that providing social welfare services remains the road map for poverty reduction. Poverty reduction entails the equilibrating process of equitable distribution of resources, empowering the people to live a decent live, providing affordable basic education, healthcare services and improving decent standard of living for the vulnerable population.

Previously, Nigerian government had purposively rolled out series of Social Investment Programmes mainly with a view to abate extreme poverty, hunger, unemployment and inequality. For example, the periods between 1962 -1968 and 1970–1974 (National Accelerated Food Production Programme-NAFPP), 1975-1980 and 1981- 1985 were designed by governments to provide basic infrastructure, diversify the economy, reduce unemployment rate, attain dynamic self-sustaining growth and raise the living standard of the people". In between, it is categorically geared towards reducing the rate of youth restiveness in volatile areas of the federation, Amnesty programme of President Ya'adua targeted in the South- South is a clear example. Adoba (2005) stressed that the subsequent Social Investment Programmes, after 1985 up till 1999, were geared towards enhancing SMEs to scale up trading, reduce poverty and hunger in the country.

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Going back still, social investment policies introduced in the 70s to reduce poverty in Nigeria are; Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) in 1977, Free and Compulsory Primary Education (FCPE) in 1977, Green Revolution (GR) in 1980, etc. GR and OFN programme were designed and implemented to increase agricultural production and facilitate the effectiveness of the performance of sub-sectors in the agricultural sector (Ibrahim & Umar, 2008). On the other hand, FCPE was put in place to reduce high level of illiteracy across rural areas in Nigeria. Notably, these programmes recorded a lot of notable achievements by improving the educational and social qualities of many people in the rural areas (Agboola & Lamidi, 2017). However, lack of consistency in the implementation of policies hinders the continuation of the program..

CBN (1998) expressed that lack of government continuity and lack of political will, social instability and peoples' commitment are some of the factors that hindered the achievement of the objectives of these programmes. Therefore, CBN (1998) did not mention how lack of accountability and transparency in the management of NSIP undermined poverty reduction in Nigeria. Therefore, this paper set out to examine how lack of good governance in the management of NSIP funds undermine poverty reduction in Nigerian.

As Ikelegbe (2013) governance refers to the mechanisms, processes, and institutions for determining and managing public affairs and society. More particularly, it has to do with the identification of societal problems and how they are addressed, how resources are extracted and allocated, the process of policy formulation and implementation (as cited in Igbinovia, 2016, 81). When this happens, we can therefore say it is good governance. Good governance is the mechanism of government based on good leadership, respect for due process and the rule of law, accountability of the political leaders to the citizens, transparency in the operations of government activities, participation and inclusiveness among others (George & Euginia, 2013). However, the Nigerian State has failed to provide for the economic needs of her citizen especially within the context of providing social welfare services to her citizens.

Essentially, governance is about the management of resources that will lead to shared prosperity and reduction in poverty among the people, it involves the equilibrating process to reducing inequality, hunger, poverty and unemployment and this what Nigerian government has failed to provide. According to World Bank (1989), governance is the application of political, economic and administrative authority to run the affairs of a State (as cited in Igbinovia, 2016). Therefore, the level of governance of any country (good governance) is directly proportional to the rate of poverty of that country. Poverty is high in Nigeria because good governance is lacking.

In this light, good governance is needed because according to Marx, the most fundamental need of man is survival, man needs to eat to carry out his daily

activities (Marx, 2008). Therefore, it is the responsibility of government to moderate the way and manner economic and social relations that would lead to a better living conditions of the people can be enhanced. Although, good governance may not in isolation end poverty but poverty cannot be reduced notably, particularly within the context of human rights without good governance. (Dereck, 2008).

Admittedly, good governance is lacking in every sector of Nigeria. This is because leaders are not accountable to those they represent, no transparency in government activities, they do not allow for popular participation and there is non-adherence to the rule of law. Laws that applies to one does not apply to another because of the privilege position they occupy. Although, several countries are making effort at poverty reduction through its Social Investment Programmes however, Nigeria is still lagging behind in terms of galvanizing good governance in the management of SIP that will produce the needed result.

The less developed nations are currently at varying stages of policy implementation aimed at economic growth that are vital not to increase output and income generation alone but also ensuring that the advantages of economic growth are appropriated across board for the benefit of her citizens. One of the strategies deployed is inclusive economic growth, some ways for promoting inclusive economic growth are investing in infrastructure and technology; trade liberalization and widening export markets; empowering small and medium businesses; providing financial enablement to the economy; ensuring macroeconomic stability; and improving public management and governance (World Bank, 2015).

It is an established fact that, poverty is a universal denominator however, some countries seems to have overcome or are overcoming the challenge overtime through a well mapped out SIP, for instance, the EU appears to have gone ahead in poverty reduction through effective implementation of SIP. The European Commission 2013 February precisely rolled out its social Investment Programme titled SIP, which member states adopted. Social Investment Programme is a wide range welfare policy that covers various sectors such as basic education, active labour market policies, training and retraining and lifelong education, healthcare and housing support among others (Boughet et al, 2015).

In 2013 when the report of the Commission was published, about 39 member nations of European Union had already began the implementing Social Investment Programme. In a study conducted, Peng (2011) indicated how SIP worked in Australia, Canada, Japan, and South Korea since the 1990s. He did a comparative analysis of the SIP reforms introduced by the two Anglo-Saxon liberal welfare administration of Canada and Australia including the two East Asian Welfare regimes of Japan and South Korea with respect to their areas of

focus. The study indicated that the two group of countries have similar policy ideas but differed in terms of their target population and policy instruments.

Canada and Australia had concentrated their SIP on children, Japan and South Korea covers a wider range, encompassing children, women and the elderly. Coming back to Ghana for instance, Wooding explained that Ghana focused on a major SIP named Poverty Reduction Project (PRP). The programme has a wider objective to reduce vulnerability in rural and urban areas. The Social Investment Funds (SIFs) which started in 1998 was a major part of the project's source of funding. This funds enhanced accessibility of the vulnerable to basic socio-economic amenities. It also made possible access to financial services to the poor and reinforced Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Local Governments (LG) to reduce poverty. In an appraisal of the SIF, Woodling (2016) commended PRP at lifting many out of poverty in Ghana by achieving success in its modest core areas.

In a series on Latin America & Caribbean, Cecchini (2017) posit that, in order to advance towards poverty alleviation, poverty reduction project must be the central focus as part of a combined process of social safety policy. In this wise, several critical policies were identified and adopted by the Economic Commission for Latin America and Caribbean ((ECLAC) (2016b) (as cited in Cecchini, 2017). This involve matching poverty reduction programmes through a global supply of quality health cum education services. It also stressed that expansion of coverage based on the tenets of actively seeking out those who are eligible and getting across to the larger vulnerable population is necessary. Also, promoting gender equality in all policies and programmes gained attention, as well as advancing care policies to support the elderly, children, and persons with special needs.

Literature abound that, in many Asian countries such as China, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Philippines and India, Social Investment Programme is aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is on the realization that homing in on SDGs will help to maximize impacts where it is most needed because SDGs provide a comprehensive all important and human right-based set of universal goals and targets that collectively shape a sustainable equitable and enduring future for all societies, irrespective of their phases of development (<https://sdgfinders.org>). This implies that poverty reduction can be achieved through good governance in the management of SIP. Effective and sound policies that addresses the root cause of poverty, prioritizing the most important needs of the poor, and provide economic opportunities that empowers the vulnerable population and enable them to improve their living condition. It is with that understanding that NSIP was introduced by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2016 (FGN, 2020). This to enable it reduce poverty, economic and social reproach that afflicts a larger proportion of the country's population.

Studies and explanations have shown the causes of poverty and factors hindering poverty reduction in Nigeria ranging from ineffective economic performance as observed above to natural disaster and insecurity. World Bank, although, the rate of poverty has been highest in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America due to the rising number of the poor, attributing it to population explosion, unemployment, armed conflict and climate change related issues (Machue, 2020). Admittedly, population explosion has the capacity to weaken poverty reduction strategy, this is because resources facilities would be overstretched as the number of people struggling to make use of the resources keeps increasing some of the resources remain elastic therefore, poverty reduction effort becomes futile.

However, this requires the government to formulate policies that would help control the rising population and the needed social welfare programmes to cater to the needs of the populace. Again, an overpopulated society without adequate government welfare programme would worsen the level of poverty. As this would lead to competition for the use of infrastructures, education, health facilities, unemployment among others. Also, we agree that unemployment can lead to and undermine poverty reduction because one's inability to earn certain amount that will be enough to sustain him per day means inability to afford basic necessities of life. Also, armed conflict has led many to IDP camps and rendered them jobless as they can no longer go about their normal businesses thereby living them with little or nothing to survive. For example, in an insurgent ravaged area of North East Nigeria, Statistics have shown that the number of the poor is highest and on the increase. War leads to displacement and when people are displaced, it affects their normal life and poverty becomes unavoidable.

Departing from the observation above, Al Binger, (2004) observe that there is a lack of enabling environment for investment that will make our country attractive for foreign investors. The elements of a conducive environment would include such factors as sound macro-economic policies, security, good governance, rule of law and protection for investors. However, the establishment of such a supportive environment is an essential but insufficient requirement for mobilizing the necessary investments. It is also necessary for countries to put in place additional policies and incentives to foster the development of their private sector and provide the ability to maximize the opportunities of international trade.

## **Methodology**

This article is predicated on how lack of good governance of NSIP funds undermine poverty reduction in Nigeria. The study adopted qualitative approach through rapid review of available national, policy documents, reports of international development agencies, and other secondary literature on poverty

in Nigeria. The participants in our interview were the graduates' students of Universities of Abuja, Lagos State University, and University of Maiduguri. The interview were conducted in other to have an in-depth grasp of the impact of NSIP on poverty reduction in Nigeria. Data were collected between January and June 2022. The final manuscript was subjected to check by the co-author in order to improve the credibility and validity of qualitative interpretations

## **Theoretical Framework**

In this study, we adopts the theory of the post-colonial state as our framework of analysis. The theory is an offshoot of the Marxist theory of the state, further developed and employed in the explication and understanding of the peculiarity of the post-colonial state by scholars such as Alavi (1973), Ekekwe (1985), Ake (1985) and Ibeanu (1998). The post-colonial state is characteristically corrupt. Corruption pervades all aspects of the post-colonial states. Corruption is an organized, interdependent process in which part of the system is either carrying out its duties according to ethics or in an improper way to the detriment of the system's original purpose. In order words, corruption covers a wide or broad spectrum of activities ranging from fraud (theft through misrepresentation) embezzlement (misappropriation of corporate or public funds) to bribery (payments made in order to gain advantage or to avert a disadvantage). Nichols (1999) observe that corruption affects any polity in a negative way or manner, but its effects are particularly acute in developing economies. Indeed, positive change and economic growth cannot occur in endemically corrupt policies because it is antithetical to good governance.

In interfacing the above assumptions to the management of NSIP for poverty reduction in Nigeria, the study presents the first systematic empirical analysis of NSIP in post-colonial Nigeria. A key finding of the study is that lack of good governance in the implementation of NSIP funds undermines poverty reduction in Nigeria. We explained that, because the post-colonial State is corrupt, it manipulates the common resources to enrich self rather than providing good governance that will enhance the living standard of the people. There cannot be good governance in highly corrupt ridden society, because corruption is antithetical to good governance and so cannot articulate policies that will reduce poverty in Nigeria. Thus, the study contributes to an existing growing body of literature on government social welfare interventions policy model for poverty reduction by exploring management of the National Social Investment Programme and how its poor implementation has impoverished the people rather than improving their lives.

## **Results and Discussion**

From our in-depth interview with graduate students of the University Nigeria, Nsukka, University of Abuja and Kogi State University, Anyigba, we



discovered that lack of accountability in the handling of NSIP funds undermine poverty reduction effort of government. Since the creation of the ministry in 2016 over 1.5 billion has been allocated to the ministry for several components such as Npower, Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT), Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programmes (GEEP) etc. Despite funds budgeted for these various components yet its impact in poverty reduction has not been felt. This is evident from the invitation of the former minister of humanitarian and disaster management Hon. Sadiya Farouq by the EFCC for interrogation over allegations bordering on misappropriation of NSIP funds during her tenure as minister.

Participants generally agree that there has been increase in the budgetary allocation to various agencies responsible for poverty reduction in Nigeria in recent time but the vulnerable population have not felt its impact as a result of corruption of officials who are saddled with the responsibility to oversee such agencies. There is lamented absence of accountability and transparency in the management of social welfare programme in Nigeria. Accountability implies a situation when one is accountable to another or groups, when one is obligated to inform another about ones activates and decisions to justify them and to be held responsible in the event of eventual misconduct (Schedler, 1999). Meanwhile, Table 1 below indicate what poverty reduction strategy seek to achieve if poverty must be reduced significantly.

**Table 1: What PRS would look like if popular demands ruled**

Concern	Popular demands	Typical PRS
Education	Primary and secondary schools free of charge	Free of charge/low fees for primary schools but fees for higher levels
Health	Treatment and medicines free of charge	Primary health care free of charge but otherwise user fees (excepting some diseases and vulnerable groups)
Agriculture	Rural reform, subsidized inputs and credits, no privatization of communal or cooperative land	Create a market for land, small-scale rural credit schemes, end public trade monopolies
Labour Market	Create job, keep employment of public sector high	Increase flexibility

Macro-Economy	Sensitivity for income and social differentiation	Restriction
Equity	Sensitivity for income and social differentiation	Avoids equity issues
Private Sector	No wholesale privatization, against big business and foreign capital	Private sector development key: privatize public services and credits
Corruption	Fight corruption and nepotism in health, education, justice, police	Fight corruption in high places (government, big business)

Based on UNCTAD (2002a) & Afrodad (2003).

According to the table above any poverty reduction strategy must look at education because once you educate a child you have empowered such a child for life. Also, on health, countries that subsidizes their health needs tend to reduce poverty significantly because citizens will be able to save more as they spend less on medical bills. Again, when agriculture is given the needed priority there will be food sufficiency and poverty will be reduced. And above all, if the conduit pipe through which the nation's resources is been wasted can be blocked there will be prosperity.

## Conclusion/Recommendation

The study revealed that the introduction of NSIP for poverty reduction has not achieved its objectives in Nigeria. The rate of poverty keep rising and the number of the poor also keep in the creasing. It noted that corruption in the management of NSIP funds led to their inability to galvanise good governance in the handling of the affairs of the programme. For instance, first, the N-Poer programme is shrouded with manipulative selection, the Conditional Cash Transfer lack transparency, money meant for poorest of the poor has failed to reach the target population. The study therefore found that the level of poverty in Nigeria between 20016 and 2022 has worsened. The situation has continued to degenerate due to systemic corruption inherent in the running of social welfare programme in Nigeria. The study recommended a stronger institutions and mechanism to check mate fraudulent practices of officials and those found guilty of sabotaging the efforts at reducing corruption be brought to book according to the law.

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