N-Power Programme and Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria: President Muhamedu Buhari's Legacy

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Abstract

This study focused on the N-power programme on Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria: President Muhamedu Buhari's Legacy. The study obtained data from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were attained through interviews and analyzed via descriptive method of data analysis, while the secondary data were obtained from books, journals etc. The finding of the study revealed that N-power programme has made a positive impact in the area of poverty alleviation, financial independence, job creation and massive employment. It also exposed that the programme has improved on education, health and agricultural sectors of the country economy. The study further discovered that the problems affecting the programme towards poverty alleviation include; bribery and corruption, delay payment of beneficiaries' stipend and absenteeism of the beneficiaries in their duty post. However, the study concluded that the N-power programme which primary initiative were geared toward poverty alleviation as tremendously achieved it purpose despite the fact that it has

faced with so many human and policy deficiencies. The work recommended that successive federal governments should sustain the programme and monitor the beneficiaries on the field to increase their productivity.

Introduction

Many successive governments in Nigerian has tried to initiate programmes that is aimed at alleviating poverty, unemployment, poor educational system as a result of lack of competent teaching staff, poor attentions to agriculture and health sectors, but the efforts have always been politicized where by leading to the collapse of the programme.

However, following the historical analysis of Mayowa and Iyanda (2014), some of this programmes initiated over times by successive governments taking from the military administrators includes, National Accelerated Food Production Project (NAFPP) by General Yakubu Gowon in 1973 this programme was intended to ensure the increase of food production through the agricultural sector. During the reign of Lt. Gen Olusegun Obasanjo the then military head of state Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) and River-Basins Development Authority (RBDA) was established between the period of 1976 and 1979, in the same vein, according to Ngofa and Chukwuemeka, (2016) the programme (RBDA) was aimed to provide self-sufficient food production in the nation. However, during the reign of Alhaji Shehu Shagari who emerged the first civilian administration after the Nigerian Civil War, initiated a programme known as Green Revolution in 1980 this programme was targeted at substituting the operation feed the nation. Similarly, the Alhaji Shehu Shagari newly initiated programme shares the same objectives with the programmed it intend to replace.

Following the return of military dictators into the Nigerian government, Gen. Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida initiated a new programme he felt could balance the challenges and failures of other programmes with Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) in 1986, while Better Life for Rural Women was set up by his wife Maryam Babangida in 1987. The interest surrounding this two initiated programmes of the husband and wife were aimed in the direction of

poverty diminution, amplify food production and empowerment of rural inhabitants.

In the inception or return of civilians back to governance in 1999, saw President Olusegun Obasanjo as the second civilian elected ruler after the Nigerian civil war. Upon his reign as the president of Nigeria, and as part of his tradition in ensuring the wellbeing of his citizen has demonstrated in his first military reign propelled him to step up with a new programme he called National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), this programme also share same view with every other programmes initiated in Nigeria, but also did not survive nor see the day light. However, during the reign of President Goodluck Jonathan, a new programme was established with the same vein to eradicate poverty in the country through empowerment scheme, called subsidy reinvestment scheme (SURE-P) 2015. This programme was massively mere with nepotism, and politicized on part bases, this is because according to Tamuno (2022) who was one of the beneficiary of the SURE-P programmed agreed that name was forwarded not on merit ground but as a member of PDP political party and of course a Ward Executive member of the party.

It is on this premise that this study became imperative to draw to attention that, despite the fact that, all the mentioned programmes initiated by successive governments have good objective plans for the economic and socio-cultural growth of the citizens in country, but failed to lack of mechanized efficiency as a result of colossal dishonesty emanating from negligence, politicization, ethnicity powered by nepotism and misappropriation of public funds by those saddled with the responsibility of piloting the affairs of the schemes. All this mentioned challenges encountered in the programmes created an impedimental factor in the realization of the required objectives enshrined in the programme.

Historical origin of N-Power programmes

The N-power programme is a scheme initiated by President Muhamedu Buhari's led Federal Government. The scheme was established through the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) to ensure job creation for Nigeria youths, alleviate poverty and empowered youths with varieties of skills that could afford the potentials of creating jobs for themselves. According to NSIP official report (2018),

the N-power scheme is aimed at creating employment and improvement Nigerian youths in the area of job creation, through skill acquisition programmes. The scheme is also interested in inculcating entrepreneurial traditions in the lives of Nigerian youths under the ages of 18–35. The N-power scheme is calculated to make possible all round human capital development in Nigerian society. This explains why the beneficiaries of the programme especially the N-Teach sub section of the programme is meant to contribution to the development of education, the N-health is geared toward promoting adequate health delivering in the country and N-Agro is to re-enforce massive food production through youth involvement in agricultural programmes.

Salary Packages for Beneficiaries

The N-Power beneficiaries are entitled to monthly stipends of ₦ 30,000. The N-power programme is multiple in natures this is because the programme encloses both the rural and urban settlers. However, the sub sections of the N-power programme are N-Teach, N-Health, N-Agro, N-Vaids, N-Build, N-Creative etc.

The Programme Package for National Integration

The programme also created avenues for ethnic integration and cultural affiliations through it mode of posting of its beneficiaries, it also created urban to rural migrations as most of its beneficiaries are posted from urban areas to rural environments to take on their primary assignment, in the same vein people from the rural areas were posted to urban cities for their trainings and acquisition of their desire skills.

Objectives of the programme

1 To re-enforce and improve the living conditions of youths within the age of 18-35 who are unemployed in Nigerians.
2 To ensure a proper improve skills of Nigerian youths that can enable them to be well placed, employable, and job creators.
3 To provide answers to already destroyed public sectors like education, health and agriculture.
4 To develop and enhance Nigerian economy through the youth.

Stages in N-power programme

The stage of N-Power in this paper will be discussed in two dimensions which includes graduate category and non graduate categories. The adoption of this process in tracing the efficacy and legacy of the programme will help the researcher to objectively discuss the programme effectively.

Graduate Stage

Under the graduate grouping, the following sub programmes were observed, N-power Teach, N-power Health, N-power Agro and N-power Vaids. The graduate grouping in this programme is aimed at providing functional and necessary service areas of the public establishment in their respective environments. In addition to their public services, the scheme empowered them with communication gadgets that could aid them in their primary engagement.

The N-power Teach

The N-power Teach is one of the sub-schemes of the N-power programme, it operates like the Nigerian Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in the area of teaching. The N-Teach is a post-tertiary engagement scheme of Nigerian youths with the payment of 30.000 for the beneficiaries of two-year period. The N-Teach programme is an auxiliary teaching programme which its beneficiaries are posted to public schools to advance and promote the federal government ideas encouraging massive literacy in the country through the basic educational communities.

N-power Health

The N-Health sub programme is a scheme that is geared toward providing assistant to public health workers to facilities adequate health delivery in the country. The N-Health is like the N-Teach programme, in which its beneficiaries are as usual taken from the graduate youths that studies health related programmes in tertiary institutions. Their monthly stipends are 30.000 and the programme runs for period of two-year.

N-power Agro

This sub section of the N-Power programme is geared toward promoting massive food production for food security in the country through rural agriculture

engagement. However, the beneficiaries of this sub programme of the N-Power scheme are saddled with primary responsibility to proffer counseling services to local and urban farmers through carryout a sanitization campaigns popularly known as N-knowledge. The beneficiaries of this programme also function in the area of assembling information from local farmers to promote agricultural sectors in the country.

Non-Graduate Phase

Under the non-graduate phase of the programme, the following sub programmes were observed, N-power Build, N-power knowledge, N-power Junior and N-power Innovation. The non-graduate level of the programme spotlight is on equipping the Nigerian non-graduates with skills and self reliance abilities that will boost their income generating lives. (Adeyanju, 2016).

N-power Build

Is a vocational component of the NSIP scheme has led to the training and certification of 200,000 unemployed Nigerian youths as a result of this contributing to building a highly competent and skilled workforce of technicians, artisans and service professionals in diverse trade or disciplines such as automobile carpentry, electrical installations, masonry, painting and decorating, plumbing and pipefitting, welding and fabrication in all the 36 states of the federation.

N-power knowledge: N-power knowledge is sub programme that is targeted at equipping Nigerian youths with world-class skills and qualification to become active in domestic and global markets.

N-power Tech hardware: has trained, certified and facilitated tooling of at least 10,000 technicians in the southern part of Nigeria to boost the device servicing and manufacturing sector. Like the N-power Tech hardware,

N-power Tech Software: has trained and facilitated tooling of 10,000 hands as software developers for the local and international software development market. The participants were enabled with a device to continue the practice and exploration of opportunities after training (www.npower.gov.ngin-techsoftware.html retrieved 18/6/2022).

The Impact of the N-power Programme as President Buhari's Administrative Legacy

The impact of the N-power programme as President Buhari's administrative legacy in the country will be discussed on the following sub headings, The Impact on Poverty Alleviation, Education, Health Delivery, Agriculture, Skill Acquisition, Job Creation through Self Reliance and so on.

The Impact of N-power Programme on Poverty Alleviation

According Aleruchi (2022) who presented himself as one of the beneficiaries of the N-power programme, postulated that, the programme meant well for Nigeria as a nation and its youths as the life wires of the nation economy. Aleruchi posit thst in the area of poverty alleviation amongst Nigerian youths, the N-power programme were objective in the sense that it envilopped both urban and rural inhabitants in the country. Aleruchi maintained that despite creating temporary employment opportunities for the youths for a specific period of time it also heave youths from the rural areas to associate with their contemporaries at the urban cities whereby forces a new way life in them. Some were exposed to creating small scale businesses that could sustain them even after the end of the programme, while some were able to build themselves back to education. In fact Aleruchi agreed that he could train himself through Masters Degree programme at the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education with the little monthly stipends he received from the programme.

Theodor (2022) while responding to the research interview opined that, for the very first he is receiving money called salary at the end of every month, and a rural dweller he was relieved of stressed of over laboring himself to earn a daily bread. He posited to keep to the standard the N-power programme has prepared for him, he ventured into a small scale provision store business for his wife and also to himself he paid to acquire a skill from the monthly stipends. Today repairs Phones and Lap Tops. At least with testimony, the above beneficiaries are living above the poverty line of one dollar per day and extending hand of fellowship to other directly or indirectly.

Some beneficiaries of the programme express their joy by saying that they are happy with the N-power programme and its monthly stipend of ₦30, 000 paid to

them. Amongst this testifiers are Nancy Igbegwe, Tonsi Benson, Buchi Darlington, Matthew Ibarabonye-Ofori and Chigozie Peters. They agreed that the N-power programme has truly built their capacity by adding to working experience in their Curriculu Vatae. Secondly they also posited that the programme has aid them in the area financial stability to thrive well and higher in the labor market. Above all, a good number of the beneficiaries see the N-Power programme as an employment opportunity they had in their life.

In justification of the testimonies generated from the field so far, the Honourable Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development Sadiya Umar Farouq assertion concerning the affirmation that about 109, 823 from both Batch A and B have launched businesses through the savings they made from the programme monthly stipends. With all sense of justice, it is factual to say that the N-power programme has strived absolutely well beyond expectation on its moves for poverty alleviation.

The Impact of N-Power in Human Resources Growth:

This impact of N-Power programme in the growth of human resources cannot be call attention to as many benefactors of the programme have demonstrate an affirmation to the actuality that, N-Power programme has truly impacted human resource growth through it impactful skill acquisition programme targeted in helping the youths for job creation, personality confidence and poverty obliteration. To this premise, it will be wise to say that, the N-Power programme has truly built on the youth's in the area of new skill acquisition, Job creation, and self reliance education, health delivery, and agricultural that has aided food production.

The Impact of N-power Programme on Skills Acquisition in Nigeria

Many youths today who are benefactors of the N-power programme have positively fashioned an impactful outcome in lives of youths in Nigeria in skills acquisition. Eyenaya (2019 an oral source) disclosed to the researcher that the N-power programme has significantly impacted positively on the youths by improving their skill ability and also creating empowerment skills on the youths in Nigeria. According to Igbefa (2022) despite the skill he got from the N-power

programme he has improved himself to a point of being an employer of labour rather a job seeker that he used to be in the days past.

Abuchi who repairs mobile phones and computers at garrison postulated that he had desires to have a skill that could afford him life sustenance. However, the N-power programme avail him the opportunity. Today, Abuchi is a software and hardware engineer, he repairs phones and laptops at garrison in Port Harcourt. Today according to him he has to his credit about 4 boys who are directing learning from him. Three (3) out of the four boys will be graduating very soon and hopefully he will accommodate others as soon as they pass out from their training.

N-power Impact on Employment of Youths

N-power programme has to its credit over 800,000 Nigerian graduates employed. This statistic was taking from batch A and B. however, the batch A category of the programme began in December 2016 and 300,000 graduate youths recorded as beneficiaries in the prgramme, while the batch B that began in August 2018 recorded about 500,000 graduate benefactors in the programme. According to a worker in post primary school board, who refused his name to be mentioned posited that by the end of August 2018, many Nigerian youths who are benefactors of the N-power programme were already deployed to several schools as teaching personnels, health, and agriculture, with a monthly stipend #30,000. (https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/06/n-power-batch-c-and-matters-arising/).
It is still on record that via the N-power online report that, the N-power programme has employ another set of 400,000 youths applicants by August, 2020 as Batch C. However, by this record already established by the N-power programme, it obvious that the programme has therefore made a noteworthy impacts in the area of job creation and employment of Nigerian youths.

The Impact of N-power Programme on Education, Health and Agriculture in Nigeria

Impact on Education: The N-teach programme has spawn colossal on education, health and agriculture in Nigeria States. In other words a good number of Rivers people have been employed as teachers in public schools especially in the rural areas through the programme. This has in turn generated adequate manpower/teaching staff in the rural education sector of the state. Consequently,

the programme has helped to address or resolve the problem of shortage of teaching staff in the state. The beneficiaries are deployed as assistant or auxiliary teachers to the public primary schools that are under staffed. They assist with teaching, school management and other functions within the school. They also take basic education to children in marginalized communities (N-power information guide, 2017).

Above record has indicated that the N-power programme has created in no small measure improvement in the education sector, this is justifiable through the record available that, majority of the beneficiaries of the programme were posted to public schools particularly primary schools in order to improve the availability of staff facilities, as well as building the health and agricultural sectors of country economy. The issue of under teaching staff has been majorly taken care of by the N-power programme. It has also contributed in the increased of health workers staff as well as agricultural productivity across the country. Indeed it right at this point to note that, the N-power programme has help in fight against poverty and joblessness in the country.

However, it is worthy to note that the N-Teach sub-section of the programme encourages the use of modern ICT gadgets in teaching and learning across the country. The beneficiaries promote teaching and learning in public schools through the use of modern instructional materials like the android phones given to them by the federal government.

Impact on Health: In the area of N-Health sub programme of the N-power has contributed enormously to the advancement of the urban and rural health sector. N-Health beneficiaries have contributed to the improvement of health care delivery in Nigeria. Also the N-Health beneficiaries operationally referred to as community extension health workers are working with the doctors and nurses in various health centers in the area of carrying immunization programmes, general outpatients' treatment especially outreach services (Justinah 2022 oral testifier).

An interview with one Mr Amadi who is a resident of Minikpeti (Iwofe), espose to the researcher that he was a beneficiary of N-power programme, batch A. he further opined that his sub section was the N-health and he was posted to primary

health care Nkpor in Rumuolumeni, in 2018, he agreed that, he was amongst those N-health beneficiaries that were dubbed for planting of flowers and trees during the world environment day. He further explained that the N-power programme helped him to set up a fish farm where he trains and supply cat fish to market women and private individuals for consumption.

Impact on Agriculture: While speaking on the N-Agro sub-sector that deals with Agriculture, one Chinedu (2022 oral interview) posited that the programme has helped him to efficiently and effectively increase his farm work, and today he is earnings well and enjoying a good standard of living as a villager. This show is that programme would have economically empowered some of the beneficiaries to establish their various agricultural projects like livestock farming such as, fish farming, poultry farming and cassava farming which have not only improved food production but guarantee healthier living for them all.

Finally, according to the N-power information guide (2017) the N-Agro sub section of the N-power programme has provided advice-giving services to farmers across Nigeria. There target is to circulate the knowledge that has been cumulative in the federal ministry of agriculture to benefit of rural farmers for their development.

The challenges facing the N-power Programme

The challenges recorded as it regards the effectiveness of the N-power programme in its mandate of poverty alleviation in Nigeria include.

Insufficient Information: there is always an information gap between the beneficiaries and the N-power officials, and this non free flow of information in the system has also created an impediment in the system. What keeps followers and leaders in unity in an organization is the free flow of information. Since this is missing in the N-power programme, it is now imposing a strong set back in the system.

Delay Payment of Beneficiaries' Stipends: one of the most prevailing challenges facing the effectiveness of the N-power programme that is directly confronting the beneficiaries is the delay payment system. The officials of this programme, has not

been able to address this issue from the time inception till date. This payment pandemic has created sluggishness in the achievement of the aim and objectives of the programme.

Supply of wrong bank verification number (BVN) by beneficiaries,
High Transportation Fare: the monthly stipends paid to the beneficiaries in most cases are not usually enough to cater for the upkeep of the beneficiaries. Some beneficiaries are posted far from their home or resident and the transportation fair they pay to their (PPA) in most cases almost takes all the stipends without any remaining.

Poor Funding of the Programme: the programmes are not properly funded by the government, this is because, according Wike (2022 an oral interview) some of the facilities need for effectiveness of the programme especially in education, health and agriculture has made the programme vulnerable.

Lack of Proper Orientation: no provision make for orientation of the beneficiaries before deploying them to their primary place of assignment. This factor is a serious effect on the programme and should blame on the part of NSIP and its officials. At least, there should a provision that could educate the beneficiaries the full ideas of the teacher exercise, this is because not all the beneficiaries has an educational background, hence lacks the mechanism in effect a productive teaching in the class room situation.

Lack of Supervision: this is chief challenge facing the effectiveness of the N-power programme. Following the interview respond of the beneficiaries, some of them opined that since they started the work they have not been visited by any supervision or monitoring team. It is obvious that, the absent of proper or no supervision will create in the system non compliance and adequate conformity to rules of the programme by the beneficiaries.

Inadequate Health Facilities: most of the local health centers in the country lacks adequate health facilities and as such all the N-power beneficiaries posted to those areas are helpless and non functional. Secondly, the challenge of non monitoring team makes beneficiaries posted to those areas to abandon the job for some others.

Corrupt Compliance with Heads of Primary Place of Assignment Areas: Most of beneficiaries of the programme connive with the head of their primary place of assignment to absent themselves from duty with an unholy alliance of payment of some amount from their monthly stipend to the heads. This unholy alliance has left the programme vulnerable to failure.

Conclusion

In drawing a conclusion on this research work, the researcher will be analyzing that indeed, the N-power programme was a huge benefit to Nigerian youth following the collapse of other programmes of same aim and objectives that did not succeed as the N-power programme. It will also an unbeatable fact the N-power programme indeed has a coloration with rural development and improvement human capital development. The programme has made positive impact on poverty decrease, financial self reliance, job creation for temporary massive employment of the youths. The programme has also recorded a huge success in the advancement of educational sector, health and agricultural sectors of the country. Secondly, the massive employment and deployment of the N-teach sub-section of N-power beneficiaries to the schools has to resolution the dilemma of deficiency of staff in the schools especially in the primary basic educational sectors in the country. On, health delivery, the programme has made significant contributions especially in rural health delivery often times referred to as community health extension services in the country. This contributory effort can be seen from the assisting roles played by the N-power beneficiaries during immunization programmes and all-purpose outpatient treatment.

On part of agricultural development, the N-power programme has provided human resource that would connect with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to provide farmers the needed information and services that would aid them of their farming activities. However, despite the huge success recorded so far in the programme, the scheme is not still free from some kind of social challenges such as ghost worker made available through bribery of some head teachers of various primary schools by the beneficiaries of the programme, delay/non-payment of beneficiaries stipend, And above all massive corruption in the system. Despite the presence of all these mentioned challenges, the programme

was able to record a positive success, hence making Nigerians to see the programme as the legacy of President Muhamedu Buhari's Administration.

Recommendation

The researcher after a proper and objective investigation into the N-power programme outlined the following recommendations that could help to sustain the productivity of the programme.

1. The federal government and the N-power agency should expose all her beneficiaries to at least some week induction exercises; this will help to equip the beneficiaries to be productive in their areas of service.
2. The federal government and the N-power officials should endeavour to set up a monitoring team that will checkmate the issue of non attendance of beneficiaries in their PPA and the bribery and corruption involved between the heads of their PPA and the beneficiaries.
3. The payment of these beneficiaries should be increased to help them meet up with some of their social needs following the state of the economy in the country.
4. The temporary nature of the programme should eradicate and permanency should be introducing to beneficiaries by absorbing them into civil service commission. This will help to address the joblessness in the country and as such fast tracking the eradication of poverty in the country
5. The federal government through its agency should address the late payment of beneficiaries' monthly stipends.
6. The federal government through its agency in charge of the programme should try as much as possible clear all withheld payments of beneficiaries to encourage and motivation the beneficiaries in the discharge of their duty.

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