

Empirical Test on the Journey to Goal One of the Millennium Development Goals (Eradication of Extreme Poverty and Hunger): A Case Study of Bida South Constituency in Niger State

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ABSTRACT

Poverty information, based on poverty data collected from the seven wards of Bida South Constituency in Bida Local Government Area of Niger State helps locate an area with the greatest need and where assistance can make the most difference in achieving Goal One of the Millennium Development Goals (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger). Population size of three hundred and fifty (350) houses was taken from the seven (7) wards of Bida South. Systematic random sample of fifteen (15) houses each from the seven wards was taken, and fifteen (15) questionnaires were administered in each ward on the bases of one at the interval of three (3) houses. Arithmetic mean and ranking was used to measure the extent of extreme poverty and hunger in the study area. Results as attested to by a mean score of 5.2 which is the least and ranking of 7th position highest number shows that in Nassarafu ward, the majority of the households are poor and it is unlikely that individuals or households can reduce their poverty if left alone in the journey to 2015. It was recommended among other things that The existing Community Skills Development Centre should be decentralized to each ward, with a new name to be known as Ward Skills Development Centre and each ward will be having its own structures to house the various types of training programmes that may be taking place.

Keywords: Poverty, Entrepreneurship, Self-Employment, Ward Skills Development Centre (WSDC), Community Skills Development Centre (CSDC)

INTRODUCTION

In the year 2000, one hundred and eighty nine governments reached one of the great decisions of the 20th century to set Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They agreed to work together to end extreme poverty and hunger. They also, set specific targets on education, gender equality, child mortality, maternal health, diseases, global partnership for development, and environmental sustainability within 15 years so that we could see if countries are reaching those targets (Babangida, 2006). Of concerned here is that with just two years to 2015, there are indications that Bida Local Government Area is likely to be able to deliver the goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger as evidenced in the only one skills development centre that cater for the needs of the ever-increasing population of young men and women who are desirous of acquiring skills that will enable them to be self employed so as to reduce their poverty and hunger levels. There are two constituencies in Bida Local Government Area of Niger Sate - Bida North and Bida South. Each of these constituencies has seven wards. The wards in **Bida North** are:

Cheniyan, Wadata, Mayaki Anni, Ma'asaba 'A', Ma'asaba 'B', Massaga 'A', Massaga 'B'. While the wards in **Bida South** which is also the research centre are: *Umaru Majigi 'A', Umaru Magiji 'B', Bariki, Nassarafu, Landzu, Kyari, and Dokodza*. Although, Bida South is our area of interest, but there were alarming statistics, disturbing predictions of poverty in Bida Town in recent times. Importantly, poverty and its root are not as complex as people think. History has it that Britain's society changed from what they were over four hundred years ago to what they are today. Corroborating on this, Hodgetts (1975) reported that, four hundred years ago, enormous poverty, low life expectancy, very few people in school, and terrible ill health characterized Britain's society. He continues that many things have happened, but principally it has been a process that was decentralized to encourage skills development for self employment in this country. United Nation Development Programme (2001) stated that if governments, at all levels in Africa can reopens and learn from Britain society's history today, they will definitely arrive at where they are expected to be by 2015. Nevertheless, this paper discusses the results of the findings from Bida South Constituency of Bida Local Government Area of Niger State.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A population sample size of three hundred and fifty (350) houses was taken from the seven (7) wards of Bida South. A systematic random sample of fifteen (15) houses each from the seven wards was taken, and fifteen (15) questionnaires were administered in each ward on the bases of one at the interval of three (3) houses. Thus, one hundred and five (105) questionnaires were distributed within the seven wards, and all were returned. But for the purpose of depth and familiarity with the subject matter, data were also gathered from this population through observations and interviews. The questionnaire utilized, requires one to tick a simple yes or no answer. The first section of the questionnaire elicits information about the demographic variables of age, sex, qualifications and employment status of the respondents while section two elicited responses on the number and types of simple household gadgets (assets) the people of the wards personally owned.

OBJECTIVES

This paper seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To find out which of the wards in the seven (7) wards of Bida South Constituency has the greatest need for help and where help received can make the most difference in eradicating extreme poverty and hunger before 2015.
- ii. To identify the ward with the highest number of people or households that cannot on their own reduce or eradicate poverty before 2015.
- iii. To draw conclusion and make useful suggestions that may assist governments at various levels in eradicating extreme poverty and hunger.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The question of poverty has long been settled as a worldwide phenomenon meaning that it exists in every human society (World Bank, 2002). It reflects the inability of individuals to satisfy their material wants. In National Planning Commission and UNDP

(2007) it was stated that the ability to satisfy one's material wants depends upon income, which in turn results from employment. However, there is an indication that the unemployment rate at the various wards in Bida South is ever increasing unless something is done to arrest the situation. Governments at all levels in Nigeria have over time demonstrated their ability to lay to rest, the problem of unemployment as it goes hand-in-hand with poverty (National Planning Commission and UNDP, 2007).

Surprisingly, investigations shows that in Nassarafu ward, a large percentage of people were not gainfully employed and a very few number of people managed to eke out basic means of existence either by selling a few commodities or by practicing subsistence farming. It was also observed that the need for self-esteem causes some people, particularly the illiterate ones, to regard themselves as being employed even though they can hardly subsist. Interestingly, the poor are supporting the poor more than the rich do. This is quite contrary to what obtains in the other wards of Bida South constituency. In such wards like Umaru Majigi Wards 'A' and 'B' an individual, who cannot maintain himself or his family from the earnings he makes from his employment simply does not regard himself as being gainfully employed. This is because most people in these two areas are educated beyond post secondary school and are often at advantage of getting high paying jobs with Federal, State or Local Government as public servants and some of the people have one or more business outlets and from where they earn additional income to supplement their earnings from government work. Thus, the prevalence of poverty is less severe in this ward. In such other areas like Dokondza, Landzu, and Kyari wards few people are educated above secondary school level while most of them are educated at least above primary school level and have basic occupational skills such as black smith, gardening, wood carving, pottery and weaving among other things as a result of their age long family entrepreneurship business. However, this age long family entrepreneurship coupled with the presence of markets in this area tends to reduce the intensity of poverty among the people of this ward as some of them who could not cope with their family occupational skills seek for shops in one of the markets to start trading activities.

Nevertheless, the statistical analysis of the data collected from the seven wards of Bida south constituency shows that in **Nassarafu ward**, 2 persons, representing 13.3% of the sample population are civil servants, 2 persons also, representing 13.30% are self-employed, 4 persons, representing 26.7% are farmers, and 3 persons, representing 20.0% are students while 4 persons, representing 26.7% are dependants.

In **Bariki ward**, 8 persons, representing 53.3% are civil servants, 2 persons, representing 13.3% are self-employed, 1 person, representing 6.7% is a farmer, 3 persons, representing 20.0% are students and 1 person, representing 6.7% is dependants. More so, in **Umaru Majigi ward 'A'** the result revealed that 7 persons, representing 46.7% are civil servants, 4 persons, representing 26.7% are self-employed, 1 person, representing 6.7% is a farmer and 2 persons, representing 13.3% are students while 1 person, representing 6.7% also are dependants. From **Umaru Majigi ward 'B'** the statistics shows that, 9 persons, representing 60.0% are civil servants, 3 persons, representing 20.0% are self-employed, no indication of a farmer while 2 persons, representing 13.3% are students and 1 person, representing 6.7% is a dependant. However, in **Kyari ward** the result indicated that 5 persons, representing 33.3% are

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civil servants, 5 persons also, representing 33.3% are self-employed, 2 persons, representing 13.3% are farmers, while 1 person, representing 6.7% is a student and 2 persons, representing 13.3% are dependants. The statistical analysis in **Dokodza ward** shows that 3 persons, representing 20.0% are civil servants, 9 persons, representing 6.0% are self-employed, 1 person, representing 6.7% is a farmer, 2 persons, representing 13.3% are students and 1 person representing 6.7% is a dependant.

Finally, in **Landzu ward** our investigations analysis revealed that, 3 persons, representing 20.0% are civil servants, 6 persons, representing 40.0% are Self-employed, 2 persons, representing 13.3% are farmers, 2 persons also, representing 13.3% are students, and another 2 persons, representing 13.3% are dependant. Poverty level may be low, moderate or high depending on the machineries put in place by government or its agent at various levels. However, the table below summarizes the foregoing discussion.

Table 1: Mean distribution and Ranking of Poverty Levels in the seven Wards of Bida South Constituency

Nassarafu Ward	Calculation of Mean		Ranking	Remarks
Gadgets/ Assets	X			
Refrigerator/ Colour TV/Set-light dish	4			
VCD/DVD/Audio CD/Home Theater	4			
Radio/tape recorder/ Hand-Set	8			
Standing/table Fan/ Ceiling Fan/ Electrical Iron (clothes presser)	9			
Laptop/desktop computer	1			
	26/5	Mean = 5.2	7th	High
Bariki Ward				
Refrigerator/ Colour TV/ Set-light dish	10			
VCD/DVD/Audio CD/Home Theater	9			
Radio/tape recorder/ Hand-Set	13			
Standing/table Fan/ Ceiling Fan /Electrical Iron (clothes presser)	14			
Laptop/desktop computer	3			
	49/5	Mean = 9.8	3rd	Low
Umaru Majigi 'A' Ward				
Refrigerator/ Colour TV/Set-light dish	14			
VCD/DVD/Audio CD/Home Theater	14			
Radio/tape recorder/ Hand-Set	13			
Standing/table Fan/ Ceiling Fan/ Electrical Iron (clothes presser)	14			
Laptop/desktop computer	4			
	59/5	Mean = 11.8	2nd	Low
Umaru Majigi 'B' Ward				
Refrigerator/ Colour TV/Set-light dish	14			
VCD/DVD/Audio CD/Home Theater	14			
Radio/tape recorder/ Hand-Set	14			

Standing/table Fan/ Ceiling Fan/ Electrical Iron (clothes presser)	13			
Laptop/desktop computer	13			
	68/5	Mean = 13.8	1st	Low
Kyari Ward				
Refrigerator/ Colour TV/Set-light dish	8			
VCD/DVD/Audio CD/Home Theater	8			
Radio/tape recorder/ Hand-Set	6			
Standing/table Fan/ Ceiling Fan/ Electrical Iron (clothes presser)	10			
Laptop/desktop computer	2			
	34/5	Mean = 6.8	5th	Low
Dokodza Ward				
Refrigerator/ Colour TV/Set-light dish	6			
VCD/DVD/Audio CD/Home Theater	6			
Radio/tape recorder/ Hand-Set	7			
Standing/table Fan/ Ceiling Fan/ Electrical Iron (clothes presser)	10			
Laptop/desktop computer	1			
	30/5	Mean = 6.0	6th	Moderate
Landzu Ward				
Refrigerator/ Colour TV/Set-light dish	12			
VCD/DVD/Audio CD/Home Theater	11			
Radio/tape recorder/ Hand-Set	9			
Standing/table Fan/ Ceiling Fan/ Electrical Iron (clothes presser)	10			
Laptop/desktop computer	4			
	46/5	Mean = 9.2	4th	Low

Sources: Researchers Questionnaire, 2013

Decision parameter: 1-5.49= High Level of Poverty; 5.50-6.49= Moderate Level of Poverty; 6.50-10.0= Lower Level of Poverty (Gupta & Gupta, 2004).

Furthermore, with the single and over stretched structure (Community Skills Development Centre, along Government College Bida, Road) situated within Bariki Ward, the researchers felt not too sure that the council area will attain poverty goal by 2015. This centre services the entire fourteen (14) wards of Bida Local Government Area of Niger State. However, this single centre in the said ward is not to the advantage of some Wards especially, Nassarafu and Kyari Wards, but Nassarafu is much at disadvantage in terms of the impact of the centre.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Sequel to what has been observed and reported in many facets above and the researchers intention to draw a general conclusion as to what went on, it was concluded that of all the seven (7) wards studied in Bida South, majority of the people of Nassarafu Ward are poor and it is unlikely that individuals or households can reduce their poverty

before 2015. The following recommendations were made to speed up the journey towards achieving poverty eradication goal of the MDGs by 2015:

- i. The existing Community Skills Development Centre should be decentralized to each ward, with a new name to be known as Ward Skills Development Centre and each ward will be having its own structures to house the various types of training programmes that may be taking place.
- ii. A new department, which we suggested to be called Department of Ward Skills Development Centre should be created in the council. Such department is to be staffed with career staff whose duties among other things are to oversee the activities of the various centres. Thus, the influence of local politicians should not be allowed to prevail in terms of staffing and function of the new department.
- iii. The funding of the construction of the training structures in each centre should come from the existing monthly ward development fund of One Million Naira (N1, 000, 000) for each ward that is coming from His Excellency, the Governor of Niger State, Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu.
- iv. Training duration at every centre and for each batch of trainees should not last more than six (6) months (i.e between one (1) and six (6) months) with monthly stipend that may not jeopardize the financial position of the local government council. However, ideally, this money should be paid from the IGR of the council.
- v. Bida Local Government Council should put in place a liberal policy environment that will guarantee the grandaunts of each centre, the opportunity to operate freely for six months before being subjected to the payment of government taxes.
- vi. Where the participants are adjudged to have possessed limited level of education, the training should be conducted in local languages (Nupe, Hausa, Gwari, Yoruba, Igbo etc.)
- vii. Men should be encouraged to allow their wives, children, boys and girls to attend training program in the centres brought close to their door steps, and lastly.

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APPENDIX I

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS DRAWN FROM THE SEVEN (7) WARDS OF BIDA SOUTH CONSTITUENCY

Nassarafu Ward		
Variables	Respondents	Percentages (%)
Civil servant	2	13.3
Self-employed (petty trader)	2	13.3
Farmer	4	26.7
Student	3	20.0
Dependant (aged, children etc)	4	26.7
Total	15	100
BARIKI WARD		
Civil servant	8	53.3
Self-employed (petty trader)	2	13.3
Farmer	1	6.7
Student	3	20.0
Dependant (aged, children etc)	1	6.7
Total	15	100
Umaru Majigi Ward A		
Civil servant	7	46.7
Self-employed (petty trader)	4	26.7
Farmer	1	6.7
Student	2	13.3
Dependant (aged, children etc)	1	6.7
Total	15	100
Umaru Majigi Ward B		
Civil servant	9	60.0
Self-employed (petty trader)	3	20.0
Farmer	0	0.0
Student	2	13.3
Dependant (aged, children etc)	1	6.7
Total	15	100
Kyari Ward		
Civil servant	5	33.3
Self-employed (petty trader)	5	33.3
Farmer	2	13.3
Student	1	6.7
Dependant (aged, children etc)	2	13.3
Total	15	100
Dokodza Ward		
Civil servant	3	20.0
Self-employed (petty trader)	9	60.0
Farmer	1	6.7
Student	2	13.3
Dependant (aged, children etc)	1	6.7
Total	15	100
Landzu Ward		
Civil servant	3	20.0
Self-employed (petty trader)	6	40.0
Farmer	2	13.3
Student	2	13.3
Dependant (aged, children etc)	2	13.3
Total	15	100

Sources: Researchers Questionnaire, 2013

APPENDIX II

NUMBER AND TYPES OF SIMPLE GADGETS PERSONALLY OWNED BY THE RESPONDENTS

Gadgets/ Assets	Nassarafu Ward	
	YES	NO
Refrigerator/ Colour TV/Set-light dish	4	11
VCD/DVD/Audio CD/Home Theater	4	11
Radio/tape recorder/ Hand-Set	8	7
Standing/table Fan/ Ceiling Fan/ Electrical Iron (clothes presser)	9	6
Laptop/desktop computer	1	14
Bariki Ward		
Refrigerator/ Colour TV/ Set-light dish	10	5
VCD/DVD/Audio CD/Home Theater	9	6
Radio/tape recorder/ Hand-Set	13	2
Standing/table Fan/ Ceiling Fan /Electrical Iron (clothes presser)	14	1
Laptop/desktop computer	3	12
Umaru Majigi 'A' Ward		
Refrigerator/ Colour TV/Set-light dish	14	1
VCD/DVD/Audio CD/Home Theater	14	1
Radio/tape recorder/ Hand-Set	13	2
Standing/table Fan/ Ceiling Fan/ Electrical Iron (clothes presser)	14	1
Laptop/desktop computer	4	11
Umaru Majigi 'B' Ward		
Refrigerator/ Colour TV/Set-light dish	14	1
VCD/DVD/Audio CD/Home Theater	14	1
Radio/tape recorder/ Hand-Set	14	1
Standing/table Fan/ Ceiling Fan/ Electrical Iron (clothes presser)	13	2
Laptop/desktop computer	13	2
Kyari Ward		
Refrigerator/ Colour TV/Set-light dish	8	7
VCD/DVD/Audio CD/Home Theater	8	7
Radio/tape recorder/ Hand-Set	6	9
Standing/table Fan/ Ceiling Fan/ Electrical Iron (clothes presser)	10	5
Laptop/desktop computer	2	13
Dokodza Ward		
Refrigerator/ Colour TV/Set-light dish	6	9
VCD/DVD/Audio CD/Home Theater	6	9
Radio/tape recorder/ Hand-Set	7	8
Standing/table Fan/ Ceiling Fan/ Electrical Iron (clothes presser)	10	5
Laptop/desktop computer	1	14
Landzu Ward		
Refrigerator/ Colour TV/Set-light dish	12	3
VCD/DVD/Audio CD/Home Theater	11	4
Radio/tape recorder/ Hand-Set	9	6
Standing/table Fan/ Ceiling Fan/ Electrical Iron (clothes presser)	10	5
Laptop/desktop computer	4	11

Sources: Researchers Questionnaire, 2013

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