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## **POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMME: A POSITIVE STEP TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper discusses the different policies adopted by the federal government of Nigeria (FGN) and the different states to alleviate poverty in the country, all of which are aimed at developing human resources for higher productivity and self sufficiency. It notes the factors that constitute stumbling blocks to advancement of society and gender injustice; and insensitive governance system; educational injustice, incompetence and corrupt governance and globalization. The paper recommends demystifying top-down development and providing professionals (i.e. entrepreneurs, project managers, media, etc) with gender analysis tools for poverty eradication among other steps.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The rich ones are different from us. They have more money than we do. But very few individuals realize how great the gap between the highest and the lowest incomes is. The Nigerian society has become a death trap within which the rich are becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer. There are inequalities in income, allocation of scarce resources, surging unemployment, death of basic amenities of life and infrastructure. There is the issue of accumulated external debts, which are stashed away in foreign banks by "our compatriots" the loans of the states have become the wealth of a few and the burden and shame of the whole citizenry. Let's consider the epileptic power supply, below capacity power facility, replenishment of Nigerian markets with second rate materials of all kinds, industries producing at less than average capacity, poor and ill funded educational system.

According to Essien (2000:13) the escalation and proliferation of cults in Nigerian institutions of learning, basic minimum wage, bribery and corruption ravaging the lives of public officers publicized in the outcry of the legislators needing some more in the name of "constituency projects" and such millions glaringly questionable.

Moral decadence classified into juvenile delinquencies, armed robbery, political thugs etc. most of these were pre-democratic variables that ached the heart of president "Olusegun Obasanjo". He then declared his intension to tackle poverty by embarking on poverty alleviation programme.

### **POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA**

Poverty alleviation programme is the federal government policy, which co-opted the states and local governments' accordingly; it is a bold and magnanimous stride at taking the bull by the horns. Any where we look, the truth is not far-fetched: poverty is the bane of Nigerian socio-economic and political life, (Essien, 2000:14).

## **HUMAN RESOURCES FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Human resources refer to human beings both gender. When we are talking about human resources development we are referring to well thought-out plans and actions aimed at developing and grooming of human beings so as to present them fit and qualified to be productive to themselves in particular and to their families and the entire society in general.

At the level of poverty, human beings are dehumanized and humiliated. The physical resources: money, materials and machines etc are hardly available. It is all labour and grinding of teeth. Imaging human creativity is but disillusionment and depression. It is at this level of animalism that the present government determine positively to impact on the lives of Nigerians to be able to lift them out of the dungeon of poverty into the glory of wealth and affluence so as to be able to tap their yet unutilized natural talents and gifts through the "seven (7) point agenda" and "re-branding project".

## **IMPLICATIONS OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES**

What does the programme entail?

Poverty alleviation is a conscientious effort at handling the economic vice of poverty. It is not a wish, but a work. A lot of factors constitute a stumbling block to the advancement of any society. Among them are the following: Conflicts and wars, Gender injustice, insensitive governance system, educational injustice, incompetent and corrupt governance, and Globalization.

Efforts are exerted aimed at actualizing the ideas of poverty alleviation: Organization of seminars and workshops. One such workshops organized by PERFORM to sensitize the media on its mission eradicating poverty. The various topics of paper presented cut across the continuum of the factors of the society are as stated below:

1. Demystifying top-down globalization – is globalization from below a sustainable alternative?
2. Natural health facilities for poverty alleviation.
3. Information strategies for poverty eradication among rural dwellers.
4. An Examination of Indigenous Communication Forms of Poverty Eradication.
5. Gender Dimensions of Mass Poverty: Providing Media Practitioners with Gender Analysis Tools for Poverty Eradication.
6. Towards Green Prosperity, Equipping the media Practitioner for the challenges of poverty eradication advocacy – the Environmental Perspective.

It is not overemphasis the fact that the media is at the forefront of the campaign against poverty in Nigeria as there is hardly a national daily or weekly magazine in any edition that does not carry a piece of news about poverty alleviation.

Another poverty alleviation workshop is the one held in the conference hall of the MBA building, Lagos State University, Ojo. It was organized by the Sociology department of LASU in conjunction with the Centre for Local Government Administrative Studies (CELGAS) with the theme: "Poverty Alleviation and Governance in Nigeria: The Elusive Goal". The workshop aimed at imbibing in the officials (all local government chairmen, Vice-chairmen, Supervisory Councillors, Speakers and Secretaries to Local Government)

high degree of proficiency in the art of policy formulation targeted at poverty reduction at local government level. Also equipping the participants with the skills in areas of project choice, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring at council levels, here project management professionals are required. Lots of developments characterized the PERFORM (Poverty Eradication Forum) workshop namely:

1. That poverty eradication is aimed at the empowerment of civil society.
2. To eradicate poverty, a consciousness of accurate self-awareness must be created in the people. And who else but the media can carry out such tasks? The media are so powerful and influential. This process of rebirth can be facilitated by media practitioners who are themselves aware of their cultural responsibilities to the people through their media.
3. The need to disabuse the belief that it is not possible to eradicate poverty and hence stress the nation's capacity and resources that should be mobilized towards total eradication and not merely alleviation was part of the observation in the communiqué that was issued at the end of the three days training programme.
4. The participants recommended that government should urgently review its current poverty alleviation efforts and attack the root causes of poverty with a view to eradicating them. They also suggested the need for government to be cautious in its deregulation programmes, particularly in the oil sector, so as not to aggravate the plight of an already impoverished citizenry.

### **POVERTY REDUCTION AND INCOME REDISTRIBUTION**

The end of poverty alleviation programme is the reduction of poverty and redistribution of income. One such means of income redistribution is the increment of basic minimum wage. However, the present administration of President Goodluck Jonathan has made statement on this, but it has not taken effect. With this arrangement, more of the public servants would be allow to share in the national income rather than been controlled by one or few persons.

Another form of income redistribution is the provision of small-scale loan facilities to the populace. However, these funds must be strictly monitored by agencies releasing them. Also creation of employment opportunities to the unemployed youth serves to spread funds. All these cannot be achieved without adequate investment in human resources through training, especially entrepreneurship development programmes i.e. ***CEFE methodology***.

### **MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION**

Where the human resources are neglected, efforts channelled at reduction of poverty cannot yield dividends. Lack of manpower planning is the bane of our society. One way to reduce poverty is developing the human resources at our disposal.

According to Essien (2000:16) organizations / companies have been urged to increase their resources earmarked for manpower training in order to meet up with the challenges of globalizations. Businesses that will thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must begin to train their manpower of human resources. A lot of investment would be required in training, upgrading and sharpening of skills, pointing out that many companies that went

through restructuring actually committed enough money on manpower training. The 21<sup>st</sup> century is also the century of "knowledge".

In this century, machines will be useful, but it is the human knowledge that will create the breakthroughs. Human resources will constitute key competitive advantage. We generally boast that Nigeria has abundant human resources. But how knowledgeable, how educated, and how skilled are these.

In dealing with the business challenges confronting the nation, there are certain key issues that must be focused on in order for our economy to compete globally. Nigeria and most developing countries need to work harder to ensure that they are not rendered irrelevant in the competitive global economy.

### **NIGERIAN FACTOR AGAINST POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMME**

The Nigerian factor against the success of the poverty alleviation programme like in Zamfara State is the theft of public resources. The Federal Government initiated the theft of the tools meant for Gusau in furtherance of the poverty alleviation programme (PAP). Minister of State for works and housing, Mr. Garba Madaki Ali, restated the allegation against the Zamfara State Government in Abuja while speaking with newsmen in his office. While dismissing the denials credited to the Deputy Governor, the Minister said his ministry had obtained detailed information on the matter from the police.

While saying that the facts were confirmed by the police reports to Chief Tony Anenih, Minister of works and housing, on the incident, he said, the Zamfara State Government unarguably provided the two hundred thousand naira for the theft of the goods, provided the truck and official for the loading and evacuation of the goods and the buyer of the goods. The Minister acted in accordance with the doctrine of "duty of care" in tort to his officials and the Nigerian people, in alerting the public to the wicked ploys of Zamfara State Government, aimed at discrediting the poverty alleviation programme in the state.

The State Government continues to refute the knowledge of the involvement of its officials in the scam. The State Acting Governor, Alhaji Mahmud Aliyu Shinkafi who denied the allegation while speaking at the Zamfara Agency for Poverty Alleviation (ZAPA) loans disbursement ceremony in Gusau, said the Ahmed Sani-led administration still believed that none of its officials was involved in the theft and therefore stood by its earlier statement on the issue. However, the state commissioner for Budget and Economic Planning, Abubakar Hussaini, said the State poverty alleviation programme was the best in the country because of its people-oriented approach and its emphasis on entrepreneurship.

### **AGRICULTURE FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMME**

Nigeria has a mixed dual economic system in which the ownership of the means of production is shared between private and public sectors, with the latter having become increasingly involved in the modern industrial sector in recent years.

The other major feature of the economy is the concomitant existence of the subsistence industries of agriculture and handicrafts in which, the majority of Nigerians earn their

living. The vast majority of farmers are engaged in subsistence farming with such characteristics as seasonal production, lack of modern agricultural implements, low capital, all of which certainly inhibit mass and extensive cultivation. But in spite of its declining share of the export market, agriculture remains the major source of employment for most people in the labour force.

The unprecedented increase in oil revenues has contributed immensely to the rapid social and economic transformation in the country. Industrial establishments have been established in large numbers and significant improvements in infrastructure have been made. At the same time, the oil boom is undoubtedly responsible for much of the illusion that Nigeria is a rich country where, ostensibly, per capita in 1977 was about ₦242:00 while a large majority of the people live on meagre income from subsistence agriculture.

Finally, it should be mentioned that foreign investments in Nigeria have assumed a significant proportion, in spite of the indigenization policy. The role of foreign investors in Nigeria in particular, has a significant bearing on the industrial relations system, and public labour policy needs to reflect or take into account the influx of foreign managers whose industrial relations experiences have been influenced by the prevailing social and cultural patterns in their respective countries. Failure to recognize these differences in the social setting of industry could cause difficult labour relation problems.

The relatively large size of the labour force in Nigeria reflects the dominating role and the huge size of the agricultural sector. Agriculture provides employment for about 70 percent of the working population. Yet Nigeria today, except for a few government plantations, agriculture maintains its subsistent characteristics, such as temporary migration and seasonal production. Moreover, in recent years, agriculture has suffered a major decline in the world market (C.B.N. Bullion, 2008:17-20).

The employment data has indicated that in 1965 there were as many as 565,000 wage-earners in Nigeria. This represents an increase of 92,300 since 1959. Based on the 196,667 labour force sample survey, 95 percent, with 17,860 million engaged in agriculture.

Generally, wage employment in agriculture is an infinitesimal percentage of total wage employment; it was 0.6 percent in urban areas and 0.8 percent in rural areas in 1966 – 67. In contrast, non-agriculture wage employment in urban centres was 21 percent and 1.5 percent for rural areas during the same period.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

As we have outlined, the following are symbols of poverty: Child labour, Prostitution, Alms-begging, and Street hawking, Unemployment and Crimes. These are caused by conflicts and wars, gender injustice, insensitive governance system, educational injustice, incompetent and corrupt governance.

The present administration efforts at reducing if not eradicating poverty through the "Seven point agenda" from our society by correcting the imperfections and disorderliness

from our socio-economic and political system so as to deal deathblow to the symbols of poverty identified is welcome.

Governments at all levels (Federal, State and Local) should embrace the concept of entrepreneurship so as to fast track the total eradication of poverty in the society instead of giving money or monthly allowances to youths. This accounts for the reasons why the Federal Government has introduced entrepreneurship development programme in our tertiary institutions.

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