

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

The Constraints of Social Welfare Policy in Rural Poverty Reduction: A Study of National Poverty Eradication Programme in Oron and Udung Uko Local Government Areas, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

Festus Nkpoyen

Senior Lecturer, Department of Sociology, University of Calabar, Nigeria

T. A. Omang

Senior Lecturer, Department of Sociology, University of Calabar, Nigeria

Beauty Usoroh Kenneth

Researcher, Department of Sociology, University of Calabar, Nigeria

Abstract:

The study investigated the constraints of social welfare policy on rural poverty reduction in Oron and Udung Uko local government areas of Akwa Ibom state as study area. Three null hypotheses were formulated namely: non-involvement of beneficiary communities in programme design, corruption and poor policy implementation and rural poverty reduction. Data were obtained using a 26-item research instrument. Expost-facto research design was adopted while data were collected from 300 randomly sampled inhabitants (male and female) of the six strata (clans) of the study. Stratified, cluster, purposive and simple random sampling procedures were variously applied at appropriate stages of the study. The generated data were statistically tested using Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient. Social welfare policies are ineffective in reducing poverty because they are constrained by non-involvement of beneficiary communities in programme design and conceptualization, corruption and poor policy implementation. Strategic options for poverty reduction in Nigeria include bottom-top approach and strengthening due process mechanism to check corruption and ensure proper project implementation.

Keywords: Social welfare policy, poverty reduction

1. Introduction

Poverty has affected all aspects of rural life including the environment, health, education, housing, nutrition, agriculture etc. It has disrupted families and communities. Countries of Sub-Saharan African are among the poorest in the world both in terms of real income as well as access to social services. About forty-five percent of the people of this region live below the poverty line. About sixty six percent of the rural people and forty three percent of urban poor live on less than \$1 per day (Nkpoyen & Basse, 2012; National Independent Report, 2004).

Poverty in Nigeria remains one of the greatest challenges the country is facing. The 1995 World Summit for Social Development defined absolute poverty as the condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health facilities, shelter, education and information. Despite alternative development strategies, many rural communities continue to register poor socio-economic conditions, rising inflation, lack of access to basic social services. In Nigeria, a large number of economically active poor people are known to reside in rural areas. Their feelings towards their plight is occasioned by the inability of governments and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to efficiently harness resources in order to better the quality of lives. The persistency of this problem continues to widen the income gap between the rich and the poor and with implication for social inequality of rural dwellers, thereby necessitating rural –urban migration (Nemedia, 2000).

Poverty has been recognized as a universal social problem that must be eradicated if the world is to be humane, stable and just (Ekong, 2003). While opening the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South African September 2002, Thabo Mbeki the then South African President told delegates that “for the first time in human history, human society possess the capacity, the knowledge and the resources to eradicate poverty and underdevelopment”. Ellis (2000) had earlier observed that “poverty is no longer inevitable and should not be tolerated; that its eradication is a practical possibility. Rural poverty tends to be of compound of absolute relative and zero-sum.

Poverty eradication has since become the major focus of the more important funding agencies of the United Nations Organization, namely UNDP and IFAD- rural poverty reduction; UNFPA-women, reproductive health and family planning; UNICEM-women empowerment; UNICEF- children and the girl child. At the 1995 Copenhagen Summit, world governments committed themselves to follow-up action and implementation in partnership with all stakeholders. They were to prepare strategies geared towards overall reduction of poverty substantially in the shortest possible time (Ekong, 2003).

Several attempts have been made by various Nigerian governments in the past at empowering and improving the standard of living of the general populace. In spite of all these effort, poverty still continues to haunt a greater proportion of the population. Some of the poverty alleviation social policies included Operation Feed the Nation (OFN, 1976), Green Revolution (1980), National Directorate of Employment (NDE, 1986), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), Family Support Programme (FSP, formerly Better Life Programme, BLP), People's Bank, Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC, now Niger Delta Development Commission- NDDC), Mass Transit Programme (MTP), Agricultural Development Project (ADP), Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS) etc. (Nkpoyen & Adalikwu, 2010 ; Aboh & Onabe, 2007).

One of the federal government sustainable development programme is the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). This policy was designed in 2000 by the then Obasanjo Administration. In order to achieve its objectives, NAPEP designated the following schemes: Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) which is targeted at helping to address the problem of unemployment among the youths of Nigeria; Capacity Enhancement Scheme (CES) which is designed for people who have basic skills but need additional resources to avoid poverty and ensure wealth creation. Through CES, beneficiaries are provided with credit information and tools/equipment that may be needed for their trade, occupation or businesses; Community Enlightenment and Sensitization Scheme (COMESS) which is a collection of programmes that employ various media to take the message of modest public support for self- help and active participation in poverty reduction and wealth creation activities to communities, using Radio, and Television programmes, information brochure, workshops/seminars and mobile video units; Social Welfare Service Scheme (SOWESS) is designed to promote projects that improve the social and personal well-being of Nigerians; Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS) deals with the provision of portable and irrigation water, transport (rural and urban), rural energy and power supply; National Resource Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS) (Fajinbesi & Uga, 2001).

NAPEP and several other past social policies for alleviating poverty have not been successful because of the factors such as exclusion of programme beneficiaries from project design, corruption, poor implementation strategies and poor funding. NAPEP with it multi-sectorial schemes has failed to transform and modernize rural communities in Akwa Ibom state of Nigeria, communities in Udung Uko and Oron local government areas have remained in a perpetual state of impoverishment. The people in these communities lack access to such basic needs as health services, education, portable water supply, minimum nutrition requirement to stay alive, and comfortable shelter etc. the communities face social infrastructural deficiencies and low standard of living in the midst of government poverty eradication policy. It was for these reasons that this study was carried out to determine the constraints of social policy in poverty reduction.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The increasing incidence of poverty in the rural areas has posed a serious concern to the government. Consequently, governments at all levels have planned, initiated and executed a number of social policies ostensibly aimed at alleviating poverty. Experience so far demonstrate that rather than transform and bring about improvement in standard of living, the communities have contrary to the objectives of social policies of poverty alleviation, continued to be impoverished. The silent majority of the rural populace continue to become victims of neglect, deprivation and exploitation. Existing poverty alleviation social policies by the government have translated into tangible social benefits in the form of improved welfare. The policies have not penetrated far enough in addressing fundamental concerns of the rural populace. The policies themselves have been laudable, but the realization of the goals of these policies have been constrained. It is observed that the poverty problem seems to grow as more policies aimed at alleviating it are initiated and implemented.

Poverty reduction policies in developing countries have been slow because of the roles of external power actors such as the World Bank and other donor agencies. These agencies have further assisted in entrenching power through such mechanisms as shaping the major economic policies of developing countries by requesting for the abolition of consumer subsidies, currency devaluation to ostensibly create a favourable climate while indirectly imposing lower real incomes on the working classes and the rural poor. Also, the cost of effecting development is disproportional when recurrent expenditures are compared with real capital expenditure. The undue bureaucratization delay and direct progress towards achievement of poverty alleviation objectives. In addition, in many developing countries, no clear policy objectives to anticipate and mitigate disasters caused by flood, drought etc exist. The inability of rural dwellers to mobilize its resources for its development and to influence the federal government in policy making and resource allocation poses a serious constrain. Thus, based on the above issues, there has been little advancement in the reduction of rural poverty in Nigerian communities despite the massive investment in the rural sector.

The policies of social welfare themselves suffered from procedural and methodological problems. They have been characterized by lack of involvement by benefiting communities, corruption, poor funding and poor policy implementation. Thus, they have been bereaved of basic ingredients of popular policy attainment.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The study sought to examine the constraints of the social policy of National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in poverty reduction in rural communities of Oron and Udung Uko local government areas of Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria. Specifically, it sought to:

- Investigate the relationship between non-participation of beneficiary communities in programme formulation and poverty reduction.
- Examine the relationship between corruption and poverty reduction.

- Determine the relationship between poor policy implementation and poverty reduction.

1.3. Hypotheses

- There is no significance relationship between non –participation of beneficiary communities in programme formulation and poverty reduction.
- There is no significant relationship between corruption and poverty reduction.
- Poor policy implementation has no significant relationship with poverty reduction.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Social Welfare Policy and Poverty

A central aim of social welfare policies is to reduce poverty. Every major industrialized nation has a set of programmes that transfer between 10% and 30% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) among the populace, a key goal of which is to improve the well-being of those at or near the bottom of the income distribution. Do these programmes work? A number of analysts contend that social welfare policies do indeed help to alleviate poverty. But the past two decades have witnessed a growing chorus of criticism. Some aver that too little of the income that is transferred actually reaches the poor. Others suggest that by providing a safety net, such programmes sap the initiative of the poor and thereby create a "poverty trap" (Lane, 1999). Existing arguments and evidence in rural communities of Sub-Saharan African support the view that social welfare programmes have failed to reduce poverty. Many reasons have been advanced for the negligible poverty-reducing impact of social welfare policies: non -involvement of beneficiary communities in poverty alleviation programmes design failure to ensure the successful implementation of the various programmes and policies, slow economic growth, economic mismanagement, infrastructural deficiencies, weak political commitment, undue incursion by political sentiments (World Bank Report, 1996). The policies also pay little attention to the framework of allocation of funds, sustainability aspect and the needed collaborative arrangement (Nwafor, 1999). Corruption has been implicated by Obasi (2001) as a cause of poor implementation of poverty programme in Nigeria (Nkpoyen, Basey & Uyang, 2014).

2.1.1. Non Participation of Beneficiary Communities in Programme Formulation and Poverty Reduction

The success of social welfare policy depends on the level of community participation in such poverty alleviation projects. Njoku (2004) asserted that most social welfare policies by various government in Nigeria at different times have produced minimal results in spite of the huge amount of resources committed into them. Ntui (2005) discovered from his study past social welfare policies failed because the intended beneficiaries were not always involved in the programmes designs. Participation enables poverty alleviation programmes/projects to be erected on the strength, traditional beliefs and values of communities concerned (their social organizations, indigenous skills, aspiration, local leadership and energy potentials) thereby practically equipping villages with the capacity to handle their own affairs on step by step basis (Akinbode, 1997). Participation implies that the poverty alleviation project has taken cognisance of the socio-cultural milieu of the community. It empowers communities in the sense of increasing their capacity to define and analyse poverty alleviation efforts in line with community felt needs (Nkpoyen, Adalikwu & Amokeye, 2009).

Participation by beneficiary communities serves as a vehicle for psychological satisfaction, motivation and mobilization. By being associated in project decisions which concern their well-being, people are able to see that they have some control over their environment. This in turn makes it easier for local and external human materials to be tapped, pooled and mobilized for poverty reduction purposes (Nkpoyen & Henshaw, 2010; Agboole, 2001). Aboh and Onabe (2007) argued that in spite of all the efforts by various government to design social welfare policy, poverty still continues unperturbed. The policies have been unsuccessful because the centre point, the people supposed to benefit are not involved in policy design. In most parts of Nigeria, since the establishment of NAPEP by the federal government efforts have been made to empower as many individuals as possible, yet the level of poverty has been sustained because the beneficiaries are neglected in programme design and implementation. Aku and Olomola (1999) contend that if poverty alleviation programmes are to be successful, careful attention has to be given to some design issues. They suggested that all poverty related programmes/ policies should determine the form of poverty to be addressed, identify possible approaches to be adopted, apply suitable principles for selecting particular programmes, determined how the intended beneficiaries are to be identified and involve them in such programme design. Ameh (2000) reported that policies and programmes dealing with poverty should involve the grassroots, the beneficiaries through a kind of dialogue where it will involve minority and evaluation. This will make the people to be adequately informed of the objectives, plans and eventual execution.

Nkom (2001) observed that a number of social welfare policies to address poverty have been introduced in the past decades without achieving any meaningful objective. A number of poverty reduction projects were expected to impact positively on the rural poor but were poorly designed and implemented because the prime beneficiaries were excluded. Poverty alleviation projects in which the people are involved and articulate their needs themselves have better chances of being understood, accepted, supported and maintained by the community (Akinbode, 2003). Ajibade and Omini (2001) argued that the need for designing sustainability into poverty alleviation policies cannot be overemphasized. Policy sustainability has several dimensions- financial, institutional, political and environmental. Ekpenyong (2005) reported that social welfare policies should allow active community participation in project identification, planning, implementation and appraisal. The underlining assumptions, are that people are willing to cooperate and work with one another;

voluntary contributions of labour, time, materials and people organize best around problems or needs they consider important. The level of success of social welfare policy depends on the extent it meets people felt needs.

2.1.2. Corruption and Poverty Reduction

Olayemi (1995) maintained that many social welfare policies have failed because those that are to manage such programmes are either fond of corruption or embezzlement of funds. Baye (1995) stated that government officials embezzle funds meant for poverty reduction programmes and often make the programme a family affair. This makes beneficiaries to suffer unduly. Abdullahi (2004) observed that NAPEP (National Poverty Eradication Programme) and YES (Youth Empowerment Scheme) have been very lofty in its outlook but more often, it is a badly implemented strategy. Many officials in the National Poverty Eradication Council (NAPEC) without proper documentation, release huge funds to non-existing beneficiaries, unrecognized and ghost persons. It is on record that in some local government areas, many people benefit from the money made available to the area without having anything to show. They do this in connivance with the officials. Uga (2001) viewed corruption as a direct hindrance to effective poverty reduction strategy in Nigeria. Corruption is generally acknowledged as having adversely affected previous poverty alleviation efforts in the country.

Obadan (1996) stressed that the manifestations and problems associated with corruption and other sharp practices affecting NAPEP are overwhelming. The effect of corruption is both direct and indirect on poverty increase. The direct effect follows from the reduction or misapplication of resources which lowers growth rates and there are no outputs and incomes to redistribute, so poverty escalates. The indirect effect is that the poor are denied resources and access to facilities that could have been provided through judicious application of siphoned/diverted resources.

Maduagwu (2007) observed that the earliest poverty alleviation programmes were the 1972 Gen. Yakubu Gowon's National Accelerated Food Production Programme and the Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank entering devoted to funding agriculture. NAPEP turned out to be a colossal waste and nothing was achieved. The Operation Feed the Nation of Obasanjo in 1976 expended much money and effort in getting ill-prepared university undergraduates to go to the rural areas to teach the peasant farmers how to farm. Chukwuma (1996) asserted that the 1979 Shagari's Green Resolution Programme had the twin objectives of curtailing food importation while boosting crop and fibre production. Many senior civil and military officers benefited. When the programme ended in 1983, 2 billion naira tax payers' money was wasted. Anyitero (2000) and Aminu (1999) stated that in 1966, Babangida established the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) for rural development. The project gulped ₦ 1.9 billion (about ₦ 80 billion today's value) without Nigerians benefiting from them. Various projects were set up for poverty alleviation purposes such as the Peoples Bank of Nigeria and the Community Bank of Nigeria. Babangida wasted more than N 100 billion in phantom projects. Neither did these financial institutions lived up to their expectations nor did they actualize their aims. Babangida's wife set up the Better Life Programme and ended up making millionaires out of the BLP officials and friends. The Better Life for rural women became the better life for rich women.

Abdulrohman (2002) stated that corruption is a problem in social welfare policy. He reported that if Buhari had been honest in his management of the Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) the amount of financial resources at his disposal would have been enough to alleviate poverty tenfold. Buhari had an average of ₦ 52 billion every year to spend. At the end of the PTF programme, Nigeria poverty and underdevelopment levels worsened. Maduagwu (2007) commenting on the demise of NAPEP asserted that it has gone the same way as past attempts. The administration of Obasanjo that midwived NAPEP was paying lip sense on the question of the plight of the Nigerian poor. The policy has been paralyzed by the corruption of Obasanjo's government. Ogwumike (2000) maintained that corruption and abuse of positions and privileges have long been features of past and present poverty reduction strategies. Amadi (2000) argued that corruption accelerated poverty reduction.

Nkpoyen, Bassey and Uyang (2014) contended that corrupt practices have led to the implementation of badly designed social welfare policies with no economic or commercial viability. Cost escalation have resulted in pricing policies which have kept the services beyond the reach of the ordinary masses who were expected to be the beneficiaries. In some cases, projects have been abandoned, both completed and uncompleted after substantial public funds have been expended. Much money have already been expended on NAPEP and YES but to no avail (Ihejimaizu, 2002). Many other exist at communities and local governments, even in our universities, the reason being that funds were diverted to serve private or group ends. Therefore, these factors have perpetuated a vicious circle of poverty and underdevelopment. Scarce resources instead of being allocated are wasted on projects without direct bearing on poverty reduction (Ihejimaizu, 2002). Poor policy implementation and poverty reduction.

The effectiveness of social welfare policy has been constrained by poor implementation brought about by inadequate funding from local government areas and lack of equipment, even essential drugs and trained manpower (Ibrahim, 2000). Madubuike (2001) reported that failure to ensure successful implementation of the various policies have deepened the incidence of poverty. According to Aliu (2001), poverty alleviation policies have failed because of poor management of the nation's resources. There have been instances of glaringly poor execution of government policies especially those aimed at the provision of social welfare services and those aimed at the provision of economic infrastructure.

Many poverty reduction programmes suffer a lot of setback due to undue incursion by political sentiments. He argued that it is this political consideration that affected the proper implementation of NAPEP in the South West zone which was controlled by Alliance for Democracy (AD). Idode (1999) maintained that until issues of poor implementation of policies and programmes in Nigeria are given urgent attention, rural areas will continue to be affected by abandoned poverty alleviation projects. Idode stated that most implementers of policies associated with poverty often do it without

experience. Okoye (1998) was of the view that most poverty reduction policies are not implemented due to lack of strong political commitment to the poverty reduction goal. Ameh (2000) corroborated the above when he argued that for there to be a meaningful impact of social welfare policy on poverty, it is important for poverty reduction programmes and measures to be implemented within the framework of rapid broad-based economic growth with equity, sound economic management and good governance. He recommended that attention be given to poverty alleviation objectives in national development plans with strategies and measures integrated into the country's overall development/policy management framework.

Poor implementation of social welfare policies has plagued Nigeria for many years now (Adeyemi, 2007). Adeyemi observed that the failure of the NAPEP as a poverty reduction programme could be entirely attributed to this fact. Abdul (2002) observed that given the present accelerated and concerted efforts at fighting the menace of poverty in Nigeria, Nigerian poverty reduction strategies will continue to fail. The implementation strategies have failed to enhance the quality and productivity of life. Obasi (1998) maintained that social welfare policies are constrained by an absence of effective collaboration and complementation among the three tiers of government. Fajingbesi (2001) maintained that NAPEP and other social welfare policies have failed to meet the expectations of Nigerians due to poor implementations occasioned by partisan considerations, corruption or other malpractices.

Olomola (1999) argued that social policies have been particularly constrained by its top-bottom planning. This engineering planning model has been the bane of social policies. To be successful, the social welfare policy should aim to address the specific needs of people, interpret them in the context of their knowledge, design what should be done, offer technical advice and plan for specific activities that would meet the needs of the people. Ottong (2006) averred that the success of social welfare policy lies in its proper conception and firm commitment to its cause and course.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

The study utilized the following theories:

2.2.1. Culture of Poverty Theory

The proponent of this theory was an American anthropologist, Osca Lewis (1950). The theory contends that poverty is a design for living which is transmitted from one generation to the next. It argues that circumstances of poverty are similar in many respects and in different societies. These similarity in circumstances and problems produce similar responses which in turn develops into a culture that is learned, shared and socially transmitted. The manifestation of poverty I viewed in three dimensions thus; on the individual level, they have a strong feeling of marginality, they have a sense of resignation and have little ability to differ gratification. At the family level, due to high rate of divorce most parents cannot provide for their members thereby increasing the rate of mother and child abandonment. Thirdly, the community level – there is a lack of effective participation and integration of the people in the major poverty reduction policies.

The theory is important in the present study. It implies that due to lack of effective participation of the people in the planning and implementation of poverty reduction in Oron and Udu local government areas of Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria, the effectiveness of these programmes are unrealistic. Even the objectives of such programmes cannot be achieved as a result of poor implementation which also manifests in the form of corruption.

2.2.2. Situational Theory of Poverty

The proponent of this theory are O'Dounel, Haralambos and Heald (1980) as a response to culture of poverty theory. It views poverty as a reaction to situational constraints rather than an issue of culture. They argued that poverty is imposed as a result of societal constraints such as low income, unemployment and illness. The poor share in the same culture with that of the society with the difference being their inability to translate opportunities into realities due to imposed constraints. The theory implies that the poverty situation in Oron and Udu local government areas of Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria is exacerbated by certain constraints imposed by the social welfare policy framework. Artificial situations such as corruption, embezzlement of fund and poor implementation of policies have aggravated poverty situation of these communities rather than ameliorating. Thus policies re supposed to transform them end up making more impoverish.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study Area

Oron local government area is located between longitude $8^{\circ} 14' E$ and $8^{\circ} 16' E$ and latitude $4^{\circ} 47' N$ in Akwa Ibom state of Nigeria. It has a population of over 142, 640ers people (NPC, 2006) and a land area of 123,917 square metres. The forest is rich in cedar, iroko, mahogany and camwood trees. There are four clans namely: Afaha Okpo clan, Afaha Ubodung clan, Afaha Ibighi clan and Idua clan. Out of these, Afaha Okpo has ten (10) villages, Afaha Ibighi one, Afaha Ubodung one while Idua clan has five (five) villages (Mbat, 2009).

Udu local government area was created out of Oron local government area of Akwa Ibom state on 6th December, 1996. It has a total area of about 112,000 square kilometre excluding the territorial waters. It has a population figure of 106,000 (NPC, 2006). Its headquarters is Eyo-fin. There are two clans namely; the Afaha Okpo clan and Ubodung clan. Emanating from the clan are twenty eight villages out of which twenty four belongs to Afaha Ubodung clan. The forest serves as a habitat for wildlife which includes parrots, monkeys, crocodiles, cobra and python (Mbat, 2009).

The both local government areas, secret societies are inseparable at whatever level government is carried out. Ekpe society was employed in precolonial days as an instrument for the enforcement of traditional authorities in both local government areas. Akata is an important society that equally played a key political role in the society. Another society is the women's secret society called Iban Isong. Another important society is Nka, made up of young men with the same age range. Both local government areas have land as the mainstay of their economy. The land in which they occupy is an area of fertile forest which makes its exploitation rewarding. Land is a communal property resulting from close kinship and friendly ties. The people are predominantly farmers and fishermen. Production is backed by the need for subsistence and little surplus for exchange. Stock breeding is practised including goats, sheep, poultry and hump less cattle. Some proportion of the population are engaged in fishing, hunting, plaiting, carpentry and production of local gin. The people have a well-developed market. The people have a strong belief in witchcraft (Ifot) (Mbat, 2009).

3.2. Research Design

Expost-facto research design was adopted in the study. This was adopted because the researcher had no direct control of independent variables because they are inherently not manipulatable (Kerlinger, 1986). The variables in this study were presumed to have already impacted on the community before the time of this research. The sample population comprised all communities in Oron and Udung Uko local government areas.

Three sampling procedures were adopted for the study. Firstly, the 6 clans formed the six strata of the study. There are 4 clans and 17 villages in Oron local government area (Afaha Okpo clan- 10 villages, Afaha Ubodung clan- 1 village, Afaha Ibigi clan- 1 village and Idua clan- 1 village). There are 2 clans in Udung Uko local government area (Afaha Okpo clan-4 villages, Ubodung clan-24 villages). The researcher purposively studied all the clans with 1 village, that is the only village in Afaha Ubodung and the only village in Afaha Ibigi were purposively studied. For the clans with more villages, the researcher adopted hat and draw method of simple random sampling to select 2 villages each. Thus, from Oron local government area, 6 villages were selected, from Udung Uko local government area, 4 villages were selected. This amounted to 10 villages and the 10 villages formed the 10 clusters of the study. To select the actual respondents for the study, systematic sampling procedure was adopted. The researcher enumerated the living houses in the villages and selected only odd numbered houses. Through this method, 30 households were selected from each village. Only one adult male or female in each household participated in the study. The researcher also carried out focus group discussions (FGDs). There were a total of 4 FGDs sessions (2 FGDs per local government). The sessions were for males (separate) and females (separate). Altogether there were 20 discussants from each local government area giving a total of 40 discussants in all. Therefore, 300 respondents participated in the questionnaire study while 40 were involved in the FGDs. The total number of subjects who took part in the study were 340.

The main research instrument was social welfare policy constraint on poverty reduction scale. It consisted of a 26 item questionnaire and a 13 item FGD guide. The research instrument was a 4-point Likert scale questionnaire. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to analyse the data.

3.3. Analysis

3.3.1. Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between non-participation of beneficiary community in programme formulation and poverty reduction.

Variable	y	y ²	xy	r-cal
	x	x ²	xy	
Poverty reduction (y)	1630	11200		
Non-participation of beneficiary community (x) In programme formulation	1850	15450	12240	0.711*

Table 1: Pearson Moment Correlation Analysis of Relationship between Non-Participation Of Beneficiary Community in Programme Formulation and Poverty Reduction (N= 300)

*Correlation significant at $p < .05$, $df = 298$, crit. $r = 0.196$, $N = 300$

Table 1 indicates that the relationship between non-participation of beneficiary community in programme formulation and poverty reduction. The calculated of $r = 0.711$ was found to be greater than the critical value of $r = 0.196$ needed for significance at 0.05 alpha level, with 298 degrees of freedom. With these results, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was accepted. This means that non-participation of beneficiary community in programme formulation and conceptualization significantly relate to poverty reduction.

3.3.2. Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between corruption (in terms of embezzlement of funds, funds poorly channelled or misapplied, funds released to non-existing beneficiaries, misapplication of resources, denial of access to resources by the poor, weak accountability) and poverty reduction.

Variable	y	y ²		
	x	x ²	xy	r-cal
Poverty reduction (y)	1630	11200		
Corruption (x ₂)	1825	15240	11945	0.652*

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Corruption and Poverty Reduction (N=300).

*Correlation Significant At $P < .05$, $Df=298$, $Crit. R = 0.196$, $N=300$

The calculated r-value of 0.652 was found to be greater than the critical value of 0.196 needed for significance at 0.05 alpha level, with 298 degree of freedom. With these results, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate was accepted. This means that corruption (in terms of embezzlement of funds, funds poorly channelled, funds released to non-existing beneficiaries, denial of access to resources by the poor and weak accountability) relate significantly to poverty reduction.

3.3.3. Hypothesis 3

Poor policy implementation (in terms of failure to target the poor specifically, lack of targeted mechanisms for the poor, political and policy instability, inadequate coordination of programmes, overlapping functions, budgetary/management problems, over tended scope of activities and inappropriate programme design) does not significantly relate to poverty reduction.

Variable	y	y ²		
	x	x ²	xy	r-cal
Poverty reduction (y)	1630	11200		
Non-participation of beneficiary community (x ₃) In programme formulation	1810	15210	11800	0.620*

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Poor Policy Implementation and Poverty Reduction (N=300)

*Correlation Significant At $P < .05$, $Df=298$, $Crit. R = 0.196$, $N=300$

The calculated r-value of 0.620 was found to be greater than the critical r-value of 0.196 needed for significance at 0.05 alpha level, with 298 degrees of freedom. With these results the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate was accepted. This means there is a significant relationship between poor policy implementation (in terms of failure to target the poor specifically, political and policy instability, inadequate coordination of programmes, budgetary/management problems, over tended scope of activities and inappropriate programme design) and poverty reduction.

4. Discussion of Findings

4.1. Non-Involvement of Beneficiary Communities in Programme Formation and Poverty Reduction

The result of analysis of hypothesis one revealed a significant relationship between non-involvement of beneficiary communities in programme formulation and poverty reduction. This findings support Ntui (2005) that NAPEP and past social welfare policies of poverty reduction have failed because the intended beneficiaries have not always been involved in programme formulation and conceptualization. The findings agree with Agboole (2001) who observed that social policies to alleviate should be seen as an entire process in which people concerned take part in the initiation and implementation of decisions. The findings support Akinbode (1997) that participation of beneficiaries enable social welfare policies to be erected on the strength, traditional beliefs and values of communities (their social organizations, indigenous skills, aspiration, local knowledge and energy) thereby practically equipping villagers with the capability to handle their own affairs on step by step basis.

4.2. Corruption and Poverty Reduction

The result of analysis of hypothesis two revealed that a significant relationship exists between corruption (manifested in embezzlement of funds, funds diverted or poorly channelled, funds released to non-existing beneficiaries, misapplication of resources, denial of access to resources by the poor, weak accountability) and poverty reduction. These findings support Ihejimaizu (2002) that much money to have been spent on NAPEP and YES to no avail. Corrupt practices have led to the implementation of badly designed projects. Scarce resources instead of being allocated and judiciously used on alleviating poverty are wasted if not out rightly diverted on projects that have little or no direct bearing on poverty reduction. The findings agree with Okojie (2000) that projects are bound to be poorly executed. A beneficiary who has not been forced to spend so much on bribes will try to recover his money by using cheap and inferior materials. The findings support Adewale (2008) that the problem of poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria is corruption and embezzlement. Olawole (2007) observed that NAPEP has been on the line for many years without recording any satisfactory result because of corruption.

4.3. Poor Policy Implementation and Poverty Reduction

The statistical analysis of hypothesis three revealed that a significant relationship exists between poor policy implementation and poverty reduction. The findings is in harmony with Idode (1999) who stated that until issues of poor implementation of policies and programmes in Nigeria are given urgent attention, poverty alleviation projects will continue to be abandoned. The findings support Obadan (2001) that the incidence of poverty remains very high notwithstanding the existence of various social welfare policies. Policies have failed because of lack of targeted mechanisms for the poor, political and policy instability have resulted in frequent policy changes and inconsistent implementation. Ibrahim's (2000) findings have been confirmed by this study. Ibrahim observed that the effectiveness of poverty reduction programmes was hampered by inadequate funding and overlapping functions ultimately leading to institutional rivalry and conflicts.

4.4. Other Explanations for the Little Progress in the Elimination of Poverty In Spite of the Massive Investments in Rural Development

- Development is a political decision: the intellectual elites have significant role to play in rural poverty reduction. Macro social factors determine many of the problems, successes and failures of rural reconstruction and poverty alleviation. The interaction between the characteristics and the attitudes of the governing elites, the existing community based organizations and the willingness of community members can determine the rate of poverty reduction in rural communities. This tripartite linkage can determine the success or failure of rural poverty reduction effort. Leaders' positive inclination, level of commitment and sincerity together with indigenous development associations and community participation may be necessary conditions for rural poverty reduction.
- The rural environment's incapability to mobilize its resources for its own development, the extent to which it can influence the centre in policy making and resource allocation and the extent to which it is organized to create a collective consciousness making for assertiveness and participation in the process of rural development for poverty reduction is a sufficient condition for poverty reduction policy failure.

5. Conclusion

The study concluded that social welfare policies are ineffective in poverty reduction because they are constrained by non-involvement of beneficiary communities in programme formulation, corruption and poor implementation. The reduction of rural poverty rests on the commitment of the ruling/governing elites in developing societies to the ideals and objectives of rural development and the availability of an effective monitoring mechanism at the community level controlled by the community itself. Poverty cannot be eradicated but governments and civil society organizations can try to reduce the incidence and severity through various accommodative and humanistic arrangements.

6. Recommendations and Conclusion

The present study has confirmed that social welfare policies have been constrained by: (i) non-inclusion of beneficiary communities in programme formulation (ii) corruption and (iii) Poor policy implementation in poverty reduction.

Based on these, the study recommends that for social welfare policies to succeed, the socio-cultural environment of benefiting communities must be factored into the design of poverty alleviation programmes by involving the concerned people. In other word, the bottom-top approach should be adopted. Government should strengthen the due process mechanisms to regulate all government activities of poverty reduction. This is to ensure that corrupt practices in Poverty Reduction Programmes are eliminated. Again, some element of targeting should be introduced in public expenditure especially for the social sector spending which will touch the lives of the poor people. There should be proper coordination of poverty alleviation programmes to reduce the incidence of poor implementation.

7. References

- i. Abdul, W. (2002). An economic insight of the economy, Ibadan: University Press.
- ii. Abdulrohman, M. (2002). Nigeria's nagging problem: the way forward, Ibadan: MacMillan Press.
- iii. Adeyemi, R. (1997). Why poverty in Nigeria: its solutions, Ibadan: Africana Press.
- iv. Akinbode, I. A (1997). Participation in self-help project among rural inhabitants: a study of Iphumo, Unpublished B.Sc project, Department of Agricultural Extension Service, University of Ibadan.
- v. Aliu, A. (2001). National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP): Completion, Implementation, Coordination and Monitory; Abuja, NAPEP Secretariat.
- vi. Aluko, S. (2005). Poverty: its remedies: In Poverty in Nigeria. The Nigerian Economic Society.
- vii. Amadi, E. (1996). The Niger Delta region: A disaster, Port Harcourt: Ibeko & Sons.
- viii. Ameh, D. (2000). Human resource development, lecture notes, University of Jos, Unpublished.
- ix. Ayoola, E. O. (2005). Corruption in Nigeria: the way forward, paper delivered at the 50th Anniversary of Ilesha Grammar School, December 17th.
- x. Ekong, E. E. (2003). An introduction to rural sociology, Uyo: Dove Education Publishers.
- xi. Fajingbesi, A. A. & Uga, E. O. (2001). Plans, programmes and poverty alleviation strategies in Nigeria, In Integration of Poverty Alleviation Strategies into Plans and Programmes in Nigeria. NCEMA, Ibadan.
- xii. Idode, S. A. (1999). Sociology of poverty: a quest for a new horizon, Ibadan: University Press.
- xiii. Madubuike, B. (2001). Strategies for economic recovery in developing economies, Kaduna: Maijira Press.

- xiv. Mbat, M. D. (2009). Strategic options for poverty reduction in Nigeria: a comparative analysis of Oron and Udung Uko local government areas of Akwa Ibom state, unpublished, M.Sc thesis, submitted to Department of Sociology, University of Calabar-Calabar, Nigeria.
- xv. Nemedi, P. (2000). Poverty reduction in Nigeria: its challenges, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.
- xvi. Nkpoyen, F., Basse, G. E. & Uyang, F. A. (2014). Health capital and poverty reduction in rural Cross River State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 2 (5), 357-372.
- xvii. Nkpoyen, F., Nkoyo, E.I. & Glory, E. B. (2013). Impediments to sustainable rural development in materially backward economy of Uyo local government area, Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria. *Research Journal of Social Sciences and Management*, 3(4), 49-60.
- xviii. Nkpoyen, F. & Basse, G. E. (2012). Micro lending as an empowerment strategy for poverty alleviation among women in Yala local government area of Cross River State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 3(18), 233-241.
- xix. Nkpoyen, F., Basse, G. E., & Uyang, F. A. (2014). Entrepreneurship, corruption and the challenge of development in Nigeria. *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, 3 (3), 104-112.
- xx. Nkpoyen, F. & Adaliku, R. (2009). Community participation in rural development: a study of rural community in Akwa Ibom and Cross River states, Nigeria. *African Journal of Arts and Cultural Studies*, 2(1), 105-111.
- xxi. Nwafor, O. I. (1999). Economic development challenges in sub-Saharan Africa. Enugu: Heinemann Press.
- xxii. Obasi, M. (1998). Economic and social issues in Nigeria, Enugu: Heinemann Press.
- xxiii. Ogwumike, W. (2001). Nigeria: an economic miracle, Benin: Harmony Press.
- xxiv. Okoye, T. (1997). Poverty alleviation efforts of UN agencies in Nigeria, *Partnership for Development*, 1 (5), 22-24.
- xxv. Olomola, A. S. & Carim, A. A. (1999). Approaches to credit impact assessment. Paper presented at NISER/CBN Jointly Organized Workshop on strategic issues in Agriculture Finance in Nigeria. NISER, Ibadan, September, pp 20-24.
- xxvi. Ottong, J. G. (2006). Whither society? Rejections on some bugging social and demographic issues in 21st century, Nigeria, 36th University of Calabar Inaugural Lecture.