
ADOPTING COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT APPROACH AS SOLUTION TO FOOD INSECURITY AND POVERTY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria suffers from poverty and food insecurity as a result of economic recession and the neglect of the agricultural sector, with the most devastating effect manifested in poor health conditions of the people leading to outbreak of various diseases and even death among the citizens. The concern to improve the standard of living of the citizens by ensuring food security and reducing the high level of poverty was attached great importance by successive governments; yet, food insecurity and poverty still persist even at higher rate. This paper is aimed at assessing the effectiveness of community-driven development approach towards solving problems of food insecurity and poverty in Nigeria. The study design was descriptive in nature and it adopted community-driven development approach. Secondary sources of data collection such as publications from National Bureau of Statistics, International Fund for Agricultural Development, World Bank, and Food and Agriculture Organization, among others, while simple content analysis was used for data analysis. The major findings were that improved agricultural productivity and adoption of improved modern technology of production contributed to food security. Also, increase in

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income of farmers and improvement in their quality of life facilitated poverty reduction. The paper therefore recommended that community participation and empowerment of the people should be adopted in order to ensure food security and poverty reduction in Nigeria.

Keywords: Nigerian economic recession, food security, poverty, community-driven development

Introduction

Nigeria is gifted with a large amount of natural & human resources which, if efficiently utilized, will not only guarantee that the nation's great potentials are fully used but will also engender rapid and accelerated socio-economic development. However, these resources have not been properly used in the right places to ensure unbiased distribution of wealth derived there from and ensure the overall development of the country. The enormous resource base that Nigeria is endowed with, if well put together and utilized could lead to the emergence of a vibrant agricultural sector capable of reducing poverty, guaranteeing food security as well as ensuring economic growth in the country.

Food security has continued to remain a matter of prominence in the 2000's, attracting several interests due to its criticality. Food security can be defined as the ability of local communities to ensure the availability of sufficient and healthy foods for households (Devereux & Maxwell, 2022). The complexity of food security allows it to be attached with issues that cut across a wide range of interrelated environmental, economic, social and political factors. In order to address food security, multiple solutions and approaches which will tackle the challenges in many region's capabilities to combat food security needs to be applied (Vogel, 2021).

Nigeria, as well as other African societies as a whole has been undergoing various developmental constraints especially on the prevalence of poverty which has become more deepened in our present day society. It has replicated and increased other social problems like insecurity, corruption, unemployment, cyber crime, begging, malnutrition, diseases, hopelessness and even death, among the people, hence, resulting to steady violation of societal laws and orderliness. Poverty reduction stands as still a significant issue or challenge for developing countries, where a large portion of the population lives in poverty. The level of poverty in Nigeria has continued to largely increase. Due to this, the government has brought up several poverty reduction programs in order to redevelop and transform the economy. (Agbor & Akams, 2021).

Literature and theoretical issues

Conceptualizing food security

Food and Agricultural Organization (2016) conceives food security as a state whereby all individuals have limited access to sufficient, nutritious and safe food meeting up with their dietary needs and preferences but also enables them to live an

healthy and active life. In essence, abundance of food or food security allows for unhindered access to nutritious and safe food that will help individuals lead a healthy life. In general, food security exists when all people at all times have unhindered access to safe and nutritious food necessary to maintain a healthy and active life. A food secured state or nation is only recognized when its people are able to get sufficient and nutritious foods at every given time and also to use the foods to meet with the body's needs. Food security as guaranteeing that all individuals or people at every possible time have unlimited access to sufficient food to live a healthy and active life. Similarly, the committee on world food security sees food security as the ability of all household members go have both physical and economic access to adequate food without the fear of losing such access. Food security has four major elements; food availability, access to food, utilization of food, and the ability to not losing such access.

The challenges acquainted with food insecurity has been seen to causing a decline and very low production in the Nigerian agricultural sector. Nigeria's agricultural sector has different factors contributing to the productivity decline affecting the sector and they are:

1. Land degradation due to continuous intense production.
2. Inadequate irrigation infrastructure.
3. Underfunding and poorly managed production infrastructure.
4. Underinvestment in agricultural research.
5. Poorly available equipments such as fertilizers, machinery, chemicals and improved seeds
6. Incompetent land management practices leading to land degradation.
7. Lack of access or availability to livestock and veterinary services.
8. Inadequate financial aid for gathering of inputs and engagement of services.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2021), the food crisis ongoing in the country stems from the level of insecurity posed by the boko haram insurgents, violent herdsmen, bandits which are all factors that prompted farmers to leave their farmlands for their own safety. Inadequate storage facilities, transportation fee hike and energy, climate change, inconsiderate government policies, several natural disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic amongst other things are other factors that influenced farmers to abandon their farmlands leading to food insecurity. Further report by NBS noted that food inflation has seen a high level increase given 48.94% (a substantial amount from 15.04% to 22.95%). More gathered reports shows the frustration of people as they lament the continuous increase in price of foodstuffs which has put them at a tight corner. Most easy and staple food that those in the low-socio economic bracket of the country could afford before has seen a high price increase, limiting the amount of food they can get.

Sociological perspectives of poverty

Looking from a sociological standpoint, poverty can be explained using two theories which are the 'blame the victim' theory and 'blame the system' theory as postulated by

an American sociologist Murray (2017). The blame the victim theory emphasizes that individuals are the cause of their own poverty, while the blame the system theory states that poverty is like a weapon that is structured and restructured in the society. He further explains that those categorized as being underclass in the society must take responsibility for being poor and also be held responsible for their own disadvantaged positions. In the 19th century, poorhouses were built on a flawed assumption: that poverty was a personal failing, a sign of individual weakness or inadequacy. The poor were stigmatized as flawed, lacking the skills, morals, or motivation to succeed. Society believed that those who achieved success did so because they deserved it, while those who struggled were simply less capable. But this harsh judgment ignored the crushing barriers that stood in the way of those born into poverty. It overlooked the fact that talent and effort alone are not enough to overcome the weight of circumstance. The truth is, poverty is often the result of systemic injustices, not personal failures.

The existence of winners and losers are regarded as fact of life. Often, explanations for poverty were sought in the life of poor people along with the attitude and outlook they supposedly espoused. This group forms part of a dependency culture. By this definition, Murray refers to poor people who rely on government welfare provision rather than entering the labor market. He argued that the growth of the welfare state has created a subculture that undermines personal ambition and capacity for self-help. Rather than looking to the future and striving to achieve a better life, the welfare department is content to accept hand-outs.

On the other hand, entrenched poverty is a stark reminder that our society is failing its most vulnerable members. As Tawney (2021) so eloquently puts it, poverty is a symptom of a larger disease (social inequality). Both extreme wealth and extreme poverty are dehumanizing forces that distort our values and erode our empathy. Extreme poverty reduces life to a mere struggle for survival, while extreme wealth indulges the rich in luxuries that numb them to the suffering of others. It's time to shift the blame from individuals to the system that perpetuates inequality. By addressing the structural barriers that keep people trapped in poverty, we can create a more just society where everyone has the chance to thrive. When we look at the devastating impact of poverty on child rearing, it's clear that we need to shift our gaze from individual failures to the larger social systems that perpetuate inequality. The 'blame the system' approach reveals how structural forces like class, gender, and access to resources like electricity, education, and job opportunities shape the lives of families and children. It's not that people living in poverty lack ambition or are trapped in a 'dependency culture' - it's that they're facing impossible choices and constraints that make it hard to break free. The lack of opportunities, not personal failures, is the real culprit. By acknowledging this, we can start to address the root causes of poverty and create a more just society where every child has the chance to thrive.

Profile of poverty in Nigeria

Nigeria, a country blessed with incredible wealth and potential, faces a devastating

reality: widespread and severe poverty. Despite its vast resources, millions of Nigerians struggle to make ends meet. This stark contradiction raises critical questions. As the Central Bank of Nigeria notes (2021), the country's riches in human and material resources should ensure better living standards for all. Yet, poverty persists. Expert Omotola (2021) highlights Nigeria's impressive natural, geographical, and socio-economic advantages, which should place it among the world's richest nations. But the harsh truth remains: poverty haunts Nigeria, begging the question - how can a country with such immense wealth struggle with poverty? What prevents Nigeria's resources from translating into better lives for its citizens? Unpacking these paradoxes is crucial to addressing the poverty crisis and unlocking Nigeria's full potential. Nigeria, a land of untapped potential, grapples with a heartbreaking reality: widespread poverty. Despite its vast natural resources and talented people, 70% of Nigerians struggle to make ends meet, with 54.4% trapped in absolute poverty (United Nations Development Program, 2021). This stark contradiction raises haunting questions.

How can a nation blessed with so much wealth leave its people in such dire straits? What prevents Nigeria's immense resources from translating into better lives for its citizens? The situation is dire, with more Nigerians falling into poverty daily. Successive governments have invested heavily in poverty reduction, yet the problem persists. Nigeria's poverty paradox is alarming. The country's immense potentials contrast sharply with its ranking as the 20th poorest nation globally (United Nations Development Program, 2021). Instead of advancing, Nigeria has degenerated into one of the poorest countries, with poverty deepening daily. This reality affects real people: families living on less than \$2 a day, children denied education and healthcare, and parents working tirelessly without hope for a better future.

Factors militating against effective poverty reduction in Nigeria

For decades, Nigeria has struggled to lift its people out of poverty, despite numerous initiatives aimed at reducing it. But, as Garba (2021) poignantly notes, these efforts have been largely ineffective. The harsh reality is that many of these programs were not designed with the poor in mind, lacking clear guidelines and suffering from political instability, corruption, and a lack of continuity. The consequences are dire: millions of Nigerians continue to live in poverty, struggling to access basic necessities like food, healthcare, and education. The United Nations Development Program (2021) sheds light on the root causes of this issue, highlighting governance and corruption as major obstacles to poverty reduction. It's not just about numbers or statistics; it's about people's lives.

The lack of effective poverty reduction programs means that families are forced to live in precarious conditions, vulnerable to hunger, disease, and exploitation. The plundering of resources by those in power only exacerbates the problem, leaving the most vulnerable members of society to bear the brunt. It's time to acknowledge the human cost of poverty and demand more from those in power. We need policies and programs that prioritize the needs of the poor, address corruption, and ensure

continuity and accountability."In Nigeria, a disturbing trend has emerged: as governance indicators decline, the economy suffers, and the people pay the price. Political instability, violence, and terrorism have become all too common, eroding trust in institutions and undermining development. The poor quality of governance has become a major roadblock to progress, trapping millions in poverty.

Corruption has insidiously permeated every level of society, siphoning resources away from those who need them most. It's not just a matter of numbers; it's about the countless individuals and families who suffer when public investments are squandered, revenues are stolen, and infrastructure crumbles. The wealthiest individuals in Nigeria often owe their fortunes to their connections to state power, rather than innovation or hard work. The consequences of corruption are far-reaching: it fuels crime, unemployment, and social unrest. It perpetuates police brutality, communal conflicts, and inter-religious tensions. Worst of all, it stifles initiatives aimed at reducing poverty and inequality, leaving the most vulnerable members of society to bear the brunt. The fight against poverty cannot succeed in a system where corruption is entrenched. It's time to hold leaders accountable, to demand transparency, and to prioritize the needs of the many over the interests of the few.

Ogwumike (2019) highlighted the factors accounting for the disappointing performance of the Nigerian economy and the inability to grapple with the problems of poverty reduction to includes, among others: political crisis, economic mismanagement particularly lack of fiscal transparency, accountability and substantial depreciation of the exchange rate of the domestic currency resulting in sporadic high cost of imported spare parts, high cost of other productive inputs for the domestic industries and serious infrastructural inadequacies. One of the factors is political instability. For far too long, Nigeria's political landscape has been scarred by military interventions, leaving a legacy of corruption, embezzlement, and economic mismanagement. The result is a crippling lack of transparency and accountability in how public funds are handled, with devastating consequences for the economy. The impact is felt by everyday Nigerians, who have seen their country's potential squandered. The economy has been left stagnant, with sluggish growth and little to no development. The lack of progress is a stark reminder of the opportunities lost due to corruption and poor leadership. Families have been denied access to basic necessities like quality healthcare, education, and infrastructure. Businesses have struggled to thrive, and innovation has been stifled. The future of Nigeria's children has been put at risk, as the country's resources have been plundered by those in power. Another factor includes macro-economic and sectoral problems. High inflation, increase in unemployment, exchange rate fluctuation, naira depreciation, public debt consisting of the huge external debt and constraint of external resources are problems affecting the Nigerian economy not leading to poverty reduction in the nation. Sector problems occur as a result of over-dependence on the petroleum industry leading to a neglect of the agricultural sector and industrial development due to inadequate technological innovations and subsequent infrastructural facilities.

In addition, there is the challenge of inadequacy of existing poverty reduction programs. Nigeria's poverty reduction efforts are hindered by disjointed programs that lack consistency, continuity, and coordination. These initiatives often compete for scarce resources and are frequently flawed from the outset, leaving vulnerable communities without effective support. Also, structural constraints are sources of concern as Nigeria's economy struggles to grow sustainably due to a shortage of homegrown innovators and entrepreneurs, hindering industrial and agricultural progress that could lift communities out of poverty.

Essential features of community-driven development approach

Empowering rural communities has been a game-changer, thanks to the Community Driven Development (CDD) approach. Since the mid-1990s, this people-centered strategy has become a cornerstone of aid efforts, championed by Multilateral Development Banks and other agencies. What drives this movement? The demand from countries and aid agencies for programs that put communities in the driver's seat. They want to see real, lasting change – poverty reduction, rural development, and stronger local institutions. The CDD approach does just that. By handing decision-making power to communities, it unlocks their potential for self-development. It's a bottom-up revolution, where local voices are heard and local solutions are forged. As Simon (2020) notes, this shift towards community-driven development has been transformative. It recognizes that the people closest to the problems are often the best equipped to find the solutions. Community-driven development empowers local communities to take charge of their own growth, trusting them to know best what they need to thrive. This approach, defined by the World Bank (2020), gives community groups control over planning, decisions, and resources, breaking away from traditional top-down methods. By recognizing people as experts in their own lives, community-driven development unlocks their potential for self-improvement.

Community-driven development is about putting people at the heart of progress. As the International Fund for Agricultural Development (2022) notes, it's not just about what's being developed, but how. Born out of past failures in poverty reduction efforts, this approach hands control to community groups, giving them a voice and agency in shaping their own destiny. By empowering communities to lead every step of the way, community-driven development achieves remarkable results: sustainable progress, efficient use of resources, inclusive growth, and poverty reduction on a larger scale. It also strengthens governance, builds social connections, and unlocks the potential of marginalized communities, ultimately complementing market and public sector efforts to create lasting change.

According to Baird (2020), community-driven development empowers beneficiaries to take the reins in transforming their own lives. This strategy enables them to: identify and prioritize their most pressing needs; design and prepare tailored micro-projects; contribute financially; oversee operation and maintenance, ensuring long-term sustainability; develop valuable skills through hands-on experience; and

ultimately, claim ownership of these projects through active participation in every phase - from conceptualization to implementation and maintenance.

Benefits of community-driven development approach

The World Bank (2020) identifies four key benefits of community-driven development: equity and inclusiveness, efficiency, governance, and human rights. This approach excels at addressing inequality, exclusion, and poverty by empowering marginalized communities. Community-driven development projects prioritize improving the well-being of the poor and vulnerable through enhanced incomes, assets, and services. Key strategies include: (i) precise targeting of benefits; (ii) placing resources directly in the hands of disadvantaged populations; (iii) actively engaging vulnerable and excluded groups; and (iv) scaling up poverty reduction initiatives for broader impact.

The community-driven development approach boosts efficiency through minimizing corruption and resource mismanagement, reducing costs and enhancing cost recovery, ensuring better quality and maintenance, and increasing utilization and willingness to pay. This approach also strengthens local governance by empowering communities through decentralized decision-making and resource allocation, fostering more participatory, accountable, and responsive local institutions. Moreover, community-driven development inherently promotes fundamental human rights principles, including participation, empowerment, accountability, transparency, and non-discrimination, which are essential outcomes in themselves.

Conclusion

Food stability otherwise known as food security consists of four inter-related concepts which are food provision, food attainability, food usage and sufficient access to food availability. Food security weaves together environmental, economic, social, and political threads that impact our well-being. Ending hunger demands collective action. Poverty's complex roots require a unified approach from all stakeholders. We must work together to break the cycle of poverty, empowering vulnerable communities to thrive. A social problem such as poverty requires a pragmatic approach in terms of policy formulation and execution with good feedback mechanism in order to combat poverty. Poverty reduction efforts should be structured around the three focal points, that is, it should be comprehensive by embracing a variety of services needed to accommodate individual and community needs; collaborative community-driven change begins with connection. By networking and organizing, locals take ownership of their well-being. Involving those affected by poverty in every stage of solution-building ensures their voices are heard and lasting progress is made.

Recommendations

- i. It is recommended that all levels of government, with support from private sector and other critical stakeholders should evolve pragmatic and well-coordinated approach necessary to address the problem of food insecurity

especially through provision of necessary production resources, adequate infrastructural facilities and entrepreneurial and technical skills.

- ii. In order to improve agricultural productivity, government, at all level and other relevant stakeholders, should facilitate and promote mechanization of farming operations, provide irrigation facilities, herbicides and pesticides, among other supports to those involved in farming and other agricultural enterprises.

The use of community-driven development approach in delivering services to beneficiaries of development programs should be institutionalized in Nigeria due to its effectiveness at ensuring active participation of the poor people and their communities in program design, operations and management and sustainability.

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