

**NATIONAL POVERTY ERADICATION PROGRAMME AND POVERTY
REDUCTION IN EBONYI STATE: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE
CONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFER**

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Abstract

This study interrogates National Poverty Eradication Programme and Poverty Reduction in Ebonyi State: A Critical Evaluation of the Conditional Cash Transfer. The objectives of the study are as follows: To ascertain how poverty eradication programme in Ebonyi State improved per capita income of every Ebonyi Citizen through conditional cash transfer. To find out if poverty eradication programme through conditional cash transfer improved access to quality food by average Ebonyi citizen. To determine the extent National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in Ebonyi State improved access to livelihood by Ebonyi people through conditional cash transfer. The researcher employed community action theory as theoretical framework and adopted quantitative research method by using primary data drawn from bar chart. The following are the findings made by the researchers: The poverty rate in Ebonyi State is still high, there is high income inequality in Ebonyi State, National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in Ebonyi State has failed to significantly improve households' access to livelihood options in Ebonyi people, there is an increase in the per capita income of Ebonyi people within the period under study. The researchers made the following recommendations: Government should involve the target beneficiaries in the formulation as well as implementation of policies and programmes made for them. Poverty reduction programmes should be specific to address one or two parameters like per capita income and or human development index (HDI). Government and all relevant stake holders should ensure proper funding of poverty reduction programmes especially in the area of human development to liberate the masses from servitude.

Key Words: Poverty, poverty eradication, Poverty reduction, Human Development Index, conditional cash transfer.

Introduction

Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programs aim to reduce poverty by making welfare programs conditional upon the receivers' actions. That is, the government only transfers the money to persons who meet certain criteria. It is a programs aimed to reduce poverty by making welfare programs conditional upon the receivers' actions. That is, the government only transfers the money to persons who meet certain criteria.

Poverty in Nigeria remains significant despite high economic growth. [Nigeria](#) has one of the world's highest economic growth rates (averaging 7.4% over the last decade), a well-developed economy, and plenty of natural resources such as oil. However, it retains a high level of poverty, with 63% living on less than \$1 per day, implying a decline in equity. There have been governmental attempts at poverty alleviation, of which the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and [National Poverty Eradication Council](#) (NAPEC) are the most recent ones.

According to Chukwuka (2008) poverty is a situation in an economy where there is inadequate level of income resulting to insufficient basic necessities of life such as health care, housing, adequate nutrition, adequate clothing etc. National Poverty Eradication Programme

(NAPEP) is a 2001 program by the [Nigerian](#) government aiming at [poverty reduction](#), in particular, reduction of [absolute poverty](#). It was designed to replace the [Poverty Alleviation Program](#). NAPEP and NAPEC coordinate and oversee various other institutions, including ministries, and develop plans and guidelines for them to follow with regards to poverty reduction. NAPEP goals include training youths in vocational trades, to support [internship](#), to support [micro-credit](#), create employment in the [automobile](#) industry, and help [VVF](#) patients.

The program is seen as an improvement over the previous Nigerian government poverty-reduction programmes. According to a 2008 analysis, the program has been able to train 130,000 youths and engaged 216,000 people, but most of the beneficiaries were non-poor.

The level of poverty in Nigeria today is quite disturbing as it has assumed an alarming proportion. According to Abdullahi (2009), both the quantitative and qualitative measurements attest to the growing incidence and depth of poverty in the country. The federal government in line with global contentions has been responding to ameliorate the worsening condition of the poor by shifting public expenditure towards poverty alleviation programmes to cushion the effects of poverty. It has been known in Nigeria that every government embarks on one form of poverty reduction strategy or the other. However what has remained an issue is the weak impact it has on the poor who are the target beneficiaries. The perceptions of the poor about poverty reduction programmes have been that of ineffectiveness and irrelevance in their lives as government poverty reduction efforts contributes little to their struggle to survive. Poverty is one of the most serious problems in Nigeria today. Despite the various efforts of government from independence to date, poverty has been on the increase. Nigeria's proportion of the poor has doubled over the last two decades, during which time the country received \$3000billion in oil and gas revenue (Oyemorni, 2003).

Indeed it is a paradox of poor people in rich country, in other words "poverty in the midst of plenty". Statistical data available indicates that by 1960 the poverty level in Nigeria covers about 15% of the population and by 1980 it rose to 28%. In 1985, the poverty level was 46% and it dropped to 43% by 1992. By 1996, the Federal Office of Statistics estimated poverty level in Nigeria at about 66%.

The poverty levels by zones as at 2008 shows that South -South has 35.1%; South East 26.7%; South West 43.0%; North Central 67.0%; North East 72.2% and North West has 71.2% as well (Soludo, 2008). One out of two Nigerians is in poverty and it is becoming dynastical, that is, children of the poor likely to become poor due to widening gap in access

to quality education. Nigeria is one of the most unequal societies in the world. Despite the plethora of poverty reduction programmes put in place by the Federal Government to fight poverty over the years, one begins to wonder why poverty is still on the increase.

National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) Through Conditional Cash Transfer and the improvement of per capital income in Ebonyi State

Conditional Cash Transfer Programme commenced in 2007 under NAPEP which was introduced in 2001 with the aim of providing strategies for the eradication of absolute poverty in Nigeria (FRN, 2001). NAPEP is to harmonize all poverty related activities of the Federal Government with the mandate to ensure that the wide range of activities are centrally planned, coordinated as well as complement one another so as to achieve the objectives of policy continuity and sustainability. NAPEP is also involved in extending intervention projects periodically to complement the efforts of the implementing Ministries, Departments and relevant Parastatals in Nigeria. EL- Rufai (2001) identified the specific objectives of the programme to include:

- empowering Nigerian youth through skills acquisition to become productively self-reliant within the nation's environment;
- provision of functional infrastructural facilities;
- provision of basic necessities of life to all Nigerians so as to bring about a socially organized and economically prosperous society;
- enhancing long-term optimum development of natural resources and that objectionable practices.

In Ebonyi State, NAPEP has improved to some extent the per capita income of most of the beneficiaries of the programme. Per capita income means how much each individual receives, in monetary terms, of the yearly income generated in the country. This is what each citizen is to receive if the yearly national income is divided equally among everyone. Igbuzor (2005) opined that NAPEP in Ebonyi State is responsible for the reduction of abject squalor and abysmal penury in Ebonyi State, so many people benefitted from the programme which alleviated the sufferings of the people of Ebonyi State.

The Poverty Reduction Programme of NAPEP through Conditional Cash Transfer and improvement in access to quality food by average Ebonyi citizen

The poverty alleviation related activities of the relevant institutions under NAPEP have been classified into four; these include:

Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES): This is concerned with providing

unemployed youth opportunities in skills acquisition, employment and wealth generation. The Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) has been sub-divided into three programmes to specifically capture all efforts related to skill acquisition and employment generation. The three programmes are: Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP), Mandatory Attachment Programme (MAP), and Credit Delivery Programme (CDP).

Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS): The scheme has the objective of ensuring the provision and development of infrastructural facilities needed in the areas of transport, communication, energy and water especially in Nigeria's rural areas. The Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS) has been programmed into four to capture all efforts related to the provision of infrastructure particularly in rural areas. These programmes are in the areas of Rural Transport Programme (RTP), Rural Energy Programme (REP), Rural Water Programme (RWP) and Rural Communication Programme (RCP).

Social Welfare Service Scheme (SOWESS): It aims at ensuring the provision of basic social services including quality primary and special education, strengthening the economic power of farmers, providing primary health care, and so on. This has been programmed into four to capture all efforts related to the provision of Social Services. These programmes are: Special Education Programme (SEP), Primary Healthcare Programme (PHP), Farmers Empowerment Programme (FEP) and Other Social Services Programme (OSSP)

Natural Resource Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS): The vision of this scheme is to bring about a participatory and sustainable development of agricultural, mineral and water resources. This has been programmed into four to capture all efforts related to the effective exploitation & development of natural resources with a view to maximizing participation and benefits by rural dwellers and also sustaining the resources while protecting the environment. The programmes are: Agricultural Resources Programme (ARP), Water Resources Programme (WRP), Solid Minerals Resources Programme (SMRP) and Environment Protection Programme (EPP).

According to Aliyu (2003:9) the targets of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) were completely wipe out poverty from Nigeria by the year 2010 based on the following three stages;

...stage one: the restoration of hope in the mass of poor people in Nigeria involving the provision of basic necessities to hitherto neglected rural dwellers.

Stage two: the restoration of economic, independence and confidence in both individuals and groups across the nation.

Stage three: wealth creation...

These efforts were informed by the government's desire to resolve decades old problems of similar programmes as a result of inefficiency, lack of transparency in policy formulation, implementation and output in areas of poverty alleviation and rural development. It became the business of government to engage in public policy initiatives and interventions to tackle poverty in the land hence the birth of NAPEP structured along a top-bottom approach.

The National Poverty Eradication programme came on stream as a colossal National vision designed for a mission of eradicating poverty in the country. It remained a favourite public image making channel for the President Obasanjo's administration between years 2001 and 2007. It was a microcosm of the entire society in action, coordinated from the federal level through NAPEP state centers and the local government levels structured along a top-bottom approach as shown in the organogram below.

According to Aliyu, A. (2003) the opportunities created by NAPEP gave rise to access to quality food in rural communities. In Ebonyi State, the National Poverty Eradication Programme introduced farmers to mechanized system of farming as government provided mechanized farming equipments, engaged extension agents to train the farmers on modern farming techniques which involved the use of mechanized farm implements like tractors to carry out farming activities. The extension workers also educated farmers on the use of on how to apply pesticides and herbicides provided by government for a robust agricultural exercise. This according to Ajulor (2013) contributed to high agricultural yield and gave Ebonyi people access to quality food. With NAPEP average Ebonyi men and women including children gained access to quality food which also promoted their health and living standard.

The Organizational Structure of NAPEP and the improvement in access to social amenities by Ebonyi people through Conditional Cash Transfer

NAPEP is a Federal Government programme designed through the NAPEP policy to give the poor a voice and integrate them into the nation economic development process. It is operated on behalf of the federal government of Nigeria by NAPEC. This body is the National Poverty Eradication Council chaired by the President of Nigeria with all the associated Ministries and Departments involved in poverty eradication as council members. Below is an organisational structure of NAPEP.

As indicated in the programme, the President of Nigeria has the highest level of executive control under which an uninterrupted flow of

information and interaction between the President and the NAPEP operatives is guaranteed under President Obasanjo (1999-2007). NAPEP was christened the “Pet Project” of the President and remained so through the era of late President Yar'Adua (2007-2010) and under President Goodluck Jonathan till the end of the study.

NAPEP ORGANOGRAM

CHAIRMAN: PRESIDENT OF NIGERIA			
VICE CHAIRMAN: VP OF NIGERIA			
SECRETARY: SECRETARY TO THE FEDERATION			
NATIONAL COORDINATOR: CHAIRMAN FOR NATIONAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE (NCC)			
DIRECTOR RPD	DIRECTOR M.E.	DIRECTOR A&S	DIRECTOR F&A
STATE COORDINATORS/STATE COORDINATORS COMMITTEE (SCCS) & STATE POVERTY ERADICATION			
HEAD, RPD UNIT	HEAD M&E UNIT	HEAD A&S UNIT	HEAD F&A UNIT
STAFF			
LOCAL GOVERNMENT MONITORING TEAM			
RECIPIENTS BENEFICIARIES ETC			

Source: *NAPEP Publications (2007)*

Next in the order of hierarchy of NAPEP is the Vice President who is the Council's Vice Chairman and acts accordingly while the Secretary of the Council is the Secretary to the Government of the Federation of Nigeria with NAPEP Abuja Office serving as the National Secretariat to the Council.

The National Coordination Committee (NCC) of NAPEP is chaired by the National Coordinator who was appointed by the President of Nigeria. This body is the technical clearing house for NAPEP and operates as a think tank and policy advisory body to the NAPEP. Membership of this council includes the Directors of Planning, Research and Statistics of all Federal Ministries with related activities and services that impact poverty. The NCC in its activities streamlines and harmonizes the functions of core poverty eradication institutions and agencies and ensures effective collaboration between Ministries and Agencies to reduce overlapping function.

NAPEP also maintains other internal structures which exist in the form of departments and directorates. They include:

- (a) Department of Research and Programme Development (DRPD)
- (b) Department of Monitoring and Evaluation (DM&E)

(c) Department of Administration and Supplies (DA&S)

(d) Department of Finance and Account (DF&A)

These departments are structured to be effective in their functions considering the enormity of their responsibility. The participating Ministries and Departments include among others the:

Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Works

Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Housing, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Women Affairs, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ministry of Communication, Ministry of Power and Steel

Source: www.NAPEP.ng.2006

Kpakol (2009:6) argued that NAPEP was set up to help ensure mass participation in the nation's economic development processes through the coordination and monitoring of federal government poverty eradication efforts at the three levels of government. It should be noted that NAPEP is a conglomeration of previous institutions and agencies such as the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF), Family Support Trust Fund (FSTF) as well as the Nigerian Agricultural Land Development Agency (NALDA) and others whose activities touched on poverty alleviation that cut across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria. NAPEP department thus exist to collate the various aspects of these past agencies into the present structure of the agency for its effective service delivery to the target population identified poor rural dwellers otherwise known as the poor widows in this study.

According to Adekoya (2010), NAPEP was instrumental to the provision of social amenities in most communities in Nigeria. In Ebonyi State, social amenities such as electricity, pipe borne water, access roads, culverts etc. These social amenities helped in improving the standard of living in Ebonyi people. In Ebonyi State, the level of poverty was high, shortly after the state was created plans to develop the state came up. NAPEP is one of the poverty alleviation programs that touched the lives of the people in respect to provision of social amenities. Through the ministry of public utilities and what was known before as Ebonyi State Rural Electrification board, so many rural communities in Ebonyi State were electrified.

Funding of National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)

NAPEP (2006) publications showed that its projects are primarily funded and supported by resources accruing or made available to it through the Poverty Eradication Fund (PEF) from the following sources. The first source is the federal government budgetary allocation to the agency which constitutes the highest percent of about seventy percent (70%) of NAPEP fund.

The second source is the counterpart funds from state government. The third source is the local government areas whose contribution comes both as cash and material resources. This tier of government makes available a little fund but assist in greater measures by making available land among the rural dwellers where the need arises for NAPEP projects. It also provides other non-financial resources as the specialized need arises in NAPEP operations within a locality from time to time.

The fourth source is Public-Private-Partnership. This involves financial institutions and Banks that participate in NAPEP operations as well as other intermediaries, credit facilitators involved in monetary transactions between NAPEP, business firms and the multinational corporations who participate in the provision of resources, technical services, and other needs of rural dwellers within such firms' localities. Others involved here are foundations, non-governmental organization (NGOs), individuals, groups, philanthropists and other partnership enlargement projects.

Other sources of fund include special donations made to the agency by states and local governments, the private sector and special deductions from Consolidated Fund of the Federal Government. It also gets donations from international donor agencies such as the World Bank, the United Nations Development, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, and the German Technical Assistance (NAPEP, 2006).

This collaboration or partnership between NAPEP, States and Local Government Areas, some commercial banks, microcredit institutions, NGO's and the organized private sector, large pools of funds were sourced to finance the various schemes and programmes of NAPEP including the Conditional Cash Transfer, the focus of this study.

NAPEP Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Scheme in Nigeria

The Conditional Cash Transfer was launched in December 2007 as

a bold and clear demonstration of late president Umaru Musa Yar'Adau's commitment to eradication of extreme poverty. The Nigeria's version of the Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (CCT Programme) is called COPE which is the acronym for "In care of the People" (Kpakol 2009:6). In the programme, Cash Transfer is made to selected households on the condition that they make certain investments in the lives of their children. The scheme consists of two components; first is the Basic Income Guarantee (BIG), which is a monthly cash handout of N1500, N3000 and N5000 depending on the school age of children if the household size is between 1,2-3 or 4 and above.

The second, one is 'Poverty Reduction Accelerator Investment (PRAI), which is a compulsory monthly saving of N7,000 for twelve months released in bulk sum of N84,000 to the household after obtaining a training from Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) as an exit strategy (Kpakol 2009:7). The monthly BIG is used by the families to purchase food, clothes and basic living for the household within the training period while the PRAI is a monthly savings component which is used to set up participants in viable economic activities that will provide income to replace the monthly BIG at the end of one year.

The criteria for eligibility in the scheme is based on the fact that the household must be identified as among the core poor in a selected community especially, the poor female headed households, poor aged headed households, households headed by physically challenged example, lepers, blind, leprosy patients, people living with HIV and AIDs, VVF and other terminally ill patients.

The conditions for participation in the scheme include the following:

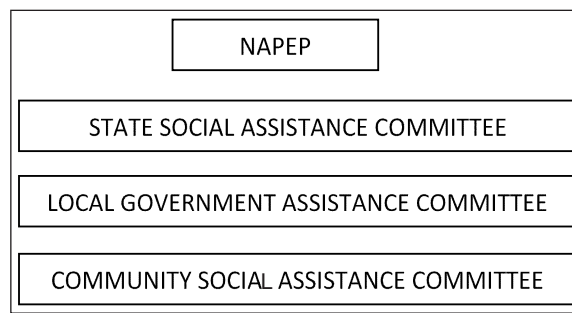
- (a) Participants must ensure enrolment and retention of school age children in school up to Basic Educational Level (Primary one to Junior Secondary Education);
- (b) Trainable participants must attend training in life and vocational skills, basic health and sanitation as available to the community.
- (c) Participants must ensure that their children under 5 years receive all government free basic health programmes such as vitamin 'A' supplementation and NPI immunization and
- (d) Participants must accept the monthly saving arrangement under the scheme as well as penalties.

The scheme is being funded with the Millennium Development

Goal (MDG) and Direct Grant funds. The participating States also provides a matching grant to the scheme. The primary objective of the scheme is to reduce the intergenerational transfer of poverty and to reduce the number of core poor and vulnerable households in the country by increasing their access to education and health.

Conditional Cash Transfer targets the poorest of the poor in the remotest communities of the country. Its activities are coordinated and implemented through the committees as show in the diagram below.

Implementation Structure of Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Scheme



Source: NAPEP Publication 2009

At the top level of implementation of CCT Scheme is NAPEP being the parent body of the scheme. NAPEP provide overall coordination and technical expertise for the implementation of the projects. It also performs the following functions: supervise conduct of baseline survey at the commencement of the project, coordinate and monitor the implementation of the scheme at Local and State levels, submit quarterly presidential reports and conduct community sensitization in collaboration with the State Governments.

Next in the implementation hierarchy is the State Social Assistance Committee. This is the apex body of the scheme at the State level.

Among the functions include: to oversee the coordination of the scheme in the State, supervise state-wide sensitization, facilitate the conduct of baseline survey, compile list of all households needing assistance in the state, supervise payments to participating communities, provide overall monitoring of the scheme at the state level and report to State Government and NAPEP headquarters. The committee has Honourable Commissioner for Local Government Affairs/Head of Poverty Eradication and NAPEP State Coordinator as

Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively. It also has the Honourable Commissioner of Education, Honourable Commissioner of Health, selected COPE MFIs/NGOs, and Commercial Banks as members. The NAPEP State Secretariat provides both secretariat and technical expert services for the committee.

Another important structure in the implementation of CCT Scheme is the Local Government Assessment Committee (LGAC). The LGAC assist in providing logistics to the Community Social Assistance Committee. The Committee also assists in monitoring the implementation of the scheme at the village/community level and report progress to the State Social Assistance Committee.

At the bottom level of implementation of CCT scheme is Community Social Assistance Committee. It is constituted of the Village Head, Church Leader, Chief Imam, Headmaster, Representative of the Community Development, Community Health Assistance and Community Women Leader. The Committee is chaired by the Village Head. Its responsibility include; overseeing the implementation of the scheme in the community, undertake community sensitization, list all households needing assistance in a community gathering, work with approved MFI/NGO to select households, recommend households needing assistance to State Social Assistance Committee, supervise payments to participating households, providing overall monitoring of the scheme at the Community Level and reporting to State Social Assistance Committee.

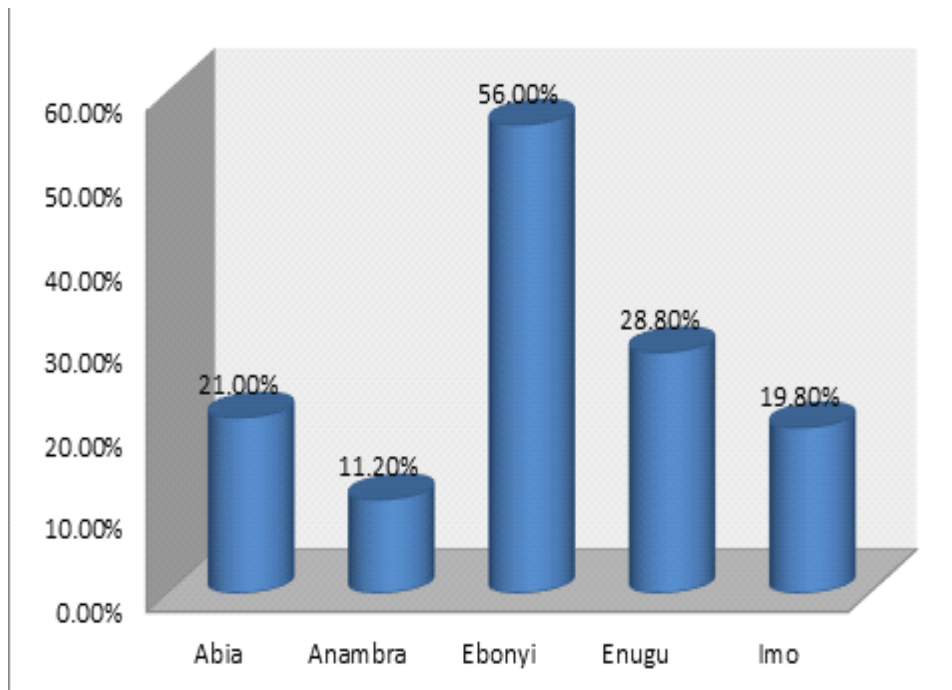
Theoretical Framework

Community Action theoretical model

The researcher adopted community action theoretical model as its frame work of analysis. The theory was propounded by Freire in 1973. The theory emphasis the need for communities to collectively strengthen their capacity to develop through educational and enlightenment of the rural people (Kulig 2000). Implicit in this theory is that residents in poor communities can team together to attain socio-economic development through education (Bereham 2004). This means that community action model involves participatory action approaches. That is to say that it builds on the strengths of a community to create changes from within (Racher, 2007). Its intention is to change by building community capacity, working in collaboration with the communities and providing a framework for residents to acquire skills and resources necessary for assessing their socio economic conditions. (Lavery, (2005). When they have done this, they can plan, implement and evaluate actions designed to improve those conditions. This means that

the model is designed to increase the capacity of communities and organisations in addressing their socio-economic determinants that will positively influence development in their rural communities (Anderson & McFarlane, 2004). The relevance of this theory to the study is that the theory has made it clear that communities can develop when they team together to plan actions that will trigger development in their various communities and not only waiting for Foreign aids, Federal and state Government interventions.

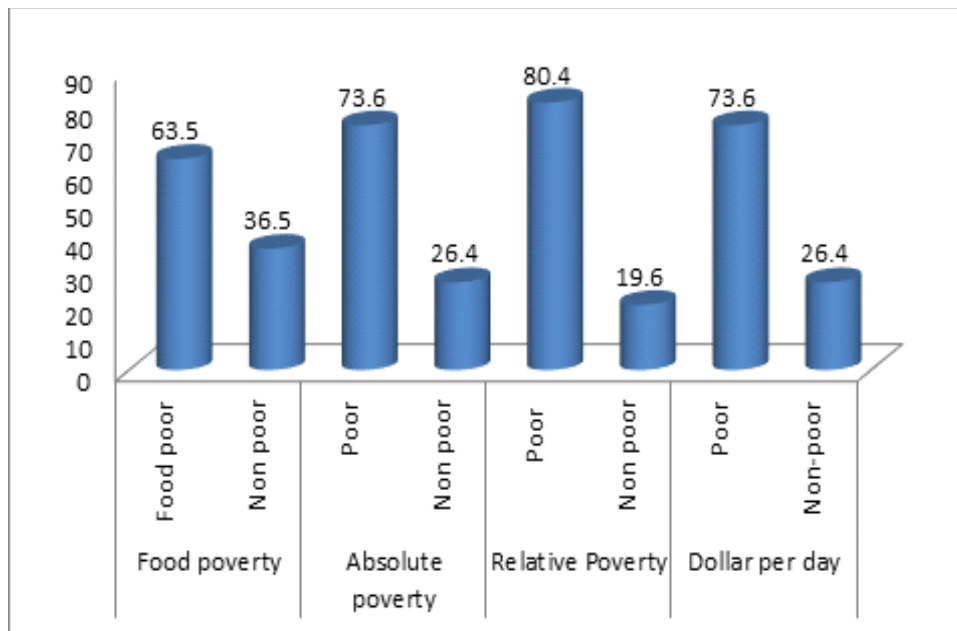
9. Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of poverty index in Ebonyi State, Nigeria



Source: *Global Multidimensional Poverty Index by the U.N (2015)*

Figure 1: **Incidence of poverty in South East States of Nigeria**

The result in figure 1 shows the incidence of poverty among the five South East States of Nigeria. The result indicates that Ebonyi State has the highest incidence of poverty (56.0%), followed by Enugu State (28.8%), Abia State (21.0%) while Imo State has 19.8% and Anambra State had the least incidence of poverty value of 11.2%. Based on this result, it is suffice to say that the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) has not been able to significantly decrease the high incidence of poverty in Ebonyi State.



Source: NBS Survey (2012)

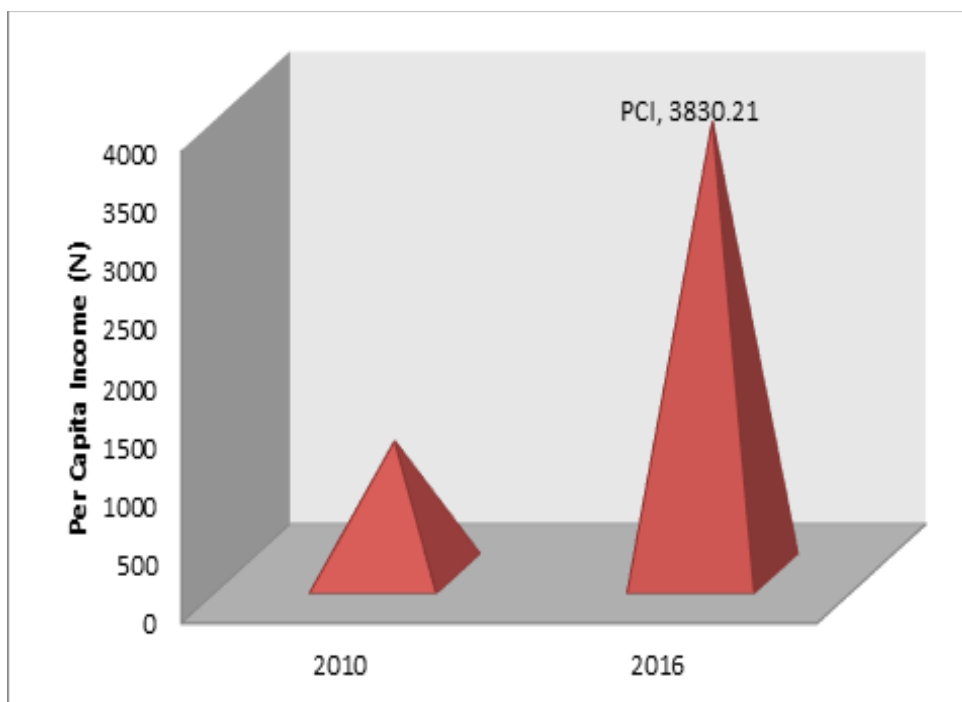
Figure 2: Poverty incidence in Ebonyi State by different poverty measures

Food Poverty Line is the amount in naira needed to purchase the minimum food needed to sustain normal physical activity and good health in human being. The result in figure 2 shows that 63.5% of Ebonyians were food poor while only 36.5% were non-food poor. This suggests that majority of Ebonyi citizens do not have the needed income to satisfy the minimal basic food needs for their healthy growth and development. This explains the high rate of malnutrition and preventable nutrition deficiency induces diseases in the State. This however shows that National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in Ebonyi State has not made significant impact in enhancing Ebonyians' access to adequate food and nutrition.

Absolute Poverty is defined in terms of the minimal requirements necessary to afford minimal standards of food, clothing, healthcare and shelter. Using this poverty measure, 73.6% of Ebonyians were living below the poverty line while 26.4% were living above poverty line.

Relative poverty is defined by reference to the living standards of majority in a given society. The result in figure 2 indicates that Ebonyi's relative poverty measurement of the poor people stood at 80.4% while the non-poor people were 19.6%.

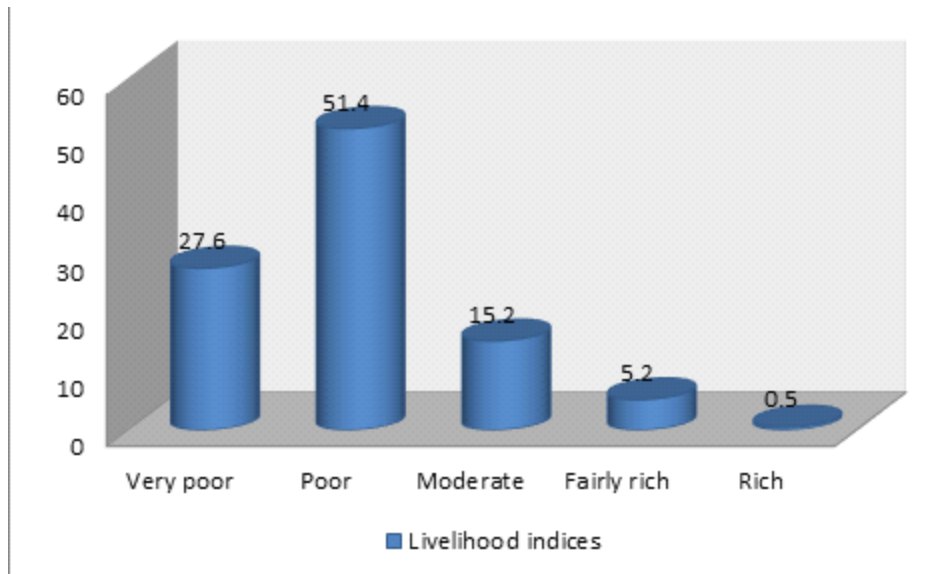
The-Dollar-per-day measure refers to the proportion of those living on less than US\$1 per day poverty line. Applying this approach, 73.6% of Ebonyians were living below US\$1 per day while 26.4% lived on above US\$1 per day. Although the World Bank standard is now US\$1.25, the NBS survey (2012) used the old reference of US\$1 as the standard in Nigeria as at the time of the survey. Based on these results in figure 2, it could be inferred that the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in Ebonyi State has not impacted significantly on the poverty level of the people of the State.



Source: NBS Survey (2012)

Figure 3: Per capita income in Ebonyi State

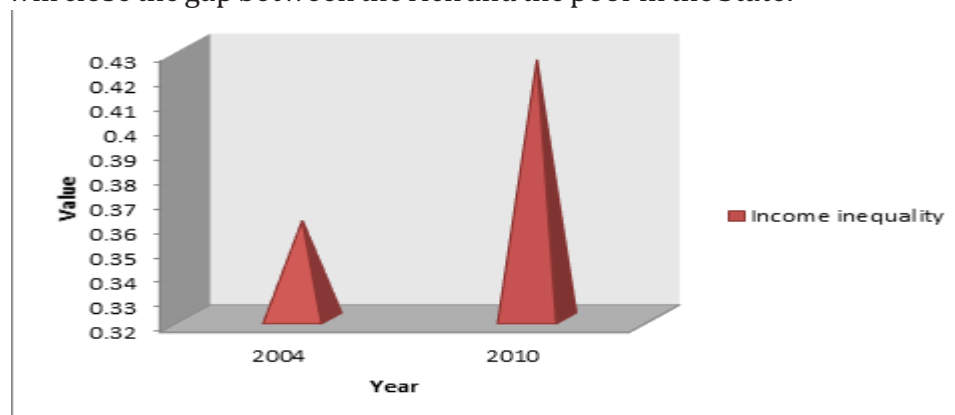
Figure 3 shows that the per capita income of Ebonyians rose from N1,122.19 in 2010 to N3,830.21 in 2016. This suggests an increase in the per capita income of Ebonyi people within the period under study. Despite this increase, it remains a paradox that the increase in per capita income does not translate to poverty reduction as incidence of poverty was still on the rise (see figure 2). Hence, the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in Ebonyi State although has improved per capita income, this growth has failed to impact significant decrease in poverty profile of the State.



Source: NBS Survey (2012)

Figure 4: Households assessment of livelihood in Ebonyi State

The result in figure 4 shows the households assessment of livelihood in relation to poverty in Ebonyi State. In this regard, most (51.4%) of Ebonyians were poor; 27.6% of them were very poor, 15.2% were moderately poor while 5.2% of them were fairly rich and very few (0.5%) of them were rich. This is an indication that the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in Ebonyi State has failed to significantly improve households' access to livelihood options in Ebonyi people. This perhaps explains the high incidence of poverty in the State. NAPEP must explore ways of enhancing households' access to livelihood options that could help them escape the vicious circle of poverty which will close the gap between the rich and the poor in the State.



Source: NBS Survey (2012)

Figure 5: Income inequality in Ebonyi State between 2004 – 2010

Income inequality

The result in figure 5 indicates that income inequality rose from 0.3598 in 2004 to 0.425 in 2010. This suggests an increasing income inequality in Ebonyi State as measured by the Gini-coefficient. This figure indicated greater income inequality during the period under study. The percentage change in income inequality value in Ebonyi State was 18.1%, which is an indication that the gap between the rich and the poor increased by 18.1% in Ebonyi State within the period under study. This ultimately implies uneven distribution of income and wealth in the State. Consequently, large proportion of the State population appears not to have reaped much from the benefits of NAPEP poverty alleviation programme and other economic growth and development programmes in the State. This calls for urgent policy redirection in order to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, considering the meager fraction (0.5%) of the rich people in the State.

Findings

The following are the findings made by the researchers:

1. The poverty rate in Ebonyi State is still high
2. There is high income inequality in Ebonyi State.
3. National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in Ebonyi State has failed to significantly improve households' access to livelihood options in Ebonyi people.

Conclusion

Before the establishment of National Poverty Eradication Programme in 2000, Federal Government of Nigeria has thought of several means to eradicate poverty in the country. NAPEP focuses on the strategies for the eradication of absolute poverty in Nigeria. NAPEP harmonized all Poverty related activities of the Federal Government and has the mandate to ensure that the wide range of activities are centrally planned, coordinated and complement one another so that the objectives of policy continuity and sustainability are achieved. Also, NAPEP is to periodically extend intervention projects to complement the efforts of the implementing 49 Ministries, Departments and relevant Parastatals throughout the country. The programme's specific objectives according to EL-Rufai (2001) include: provision of enabling empowerment for Nigerian youth to acquire skills and become

productively self reliant in the nation's environment; provision of functional infrastructural facilities; provision of basic necessities of life to all Nigerians so as to bring about a socially organized and economically prosperous society; enhancing long-term optimum development of natural resources and that objectionable practices.

In Ebonyi State, some of the strategies mentioned above were not realized. The war of fighting poverty in Ebonyi State by NAPEP took a very slow motion because of low level of awareness created by the authorities that were mandated to implement the programme. That is why other poverty reduction or eradication programme came up in the state to salvage the situation. The present administration in Ebonyi State has embarked on many poverty eradication programme targeting the youth and the women.

12. Recommendations

The researchers made the following recommendations:

1. Government should involve the target beneficiaries in the formulation as well as implementation of policies and programmes made for them.
2. Poverty reduction programmes should be specific to address one or two parameters like per capita income and or human development index (HDI), as the study has shown that one of the factors responsible for the failure of NAPEP was its too broad objective.
3. It is also the recommendation of this paper that government and all relevant stake holders should ensure proper funding of poverty reduction programmes especially in the area of human development to liberate the masses from servitude.

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