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**ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OF
MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS) ON POVERTY REDUCTION IN
IDAH AND IBAJI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF KOGI STATE.**

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Abstract

Poverty in Nigeria has been a serious challenge and a contentious issue to the government, it affects the general population of the country. The problem is so endemic to the extent that Nigeria became one of the poorest nation in the world despite the implementation of several poverty reduction programs by the government to address the issue and improve the life of the populace. The poverty reduction programme in Nigeria, which aimed at reducing poverty, have not been successful. Therefore, the study assesses the Effect of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals on poverty reduction in Idah and Ibaji LGAs Areas of Kogi State (2007-2013). The major objective of the study is to assess the contribution of Millennium Development Goal I on poverty reduction. The data for this study is generated through the secondary sources of data collection from journals, textbooks, materials from the internet. The study reveal that poverty cannot be totally stem out, but can be reduce with genuine effort of the stakeholders. The finding of the study indicate that, insufficient funding, crises, corruption, and mismanagement of funds, political instability and a discontinuity in planned programs are the major challenges of MDGs. The study recommends that government should try by all means to create conducive atmospheres that will reduce conflict and social crisis, mismanagement of funds, there should be transparency by the government and the coordinator of MDGs and other poverty reduction programs. The government should ensure adequate political stability and adequate coordination of efforts by parties that contributed to poverty reduction programs.

Key Words: Poverty, Poverty Reduction, Implementation, Millennium Development Goals, Kogi State.

Introduction

Poverty has been a serious challenge and a contentious issue to the government in the Third World Nations, particularly in Nigeria even before the declaration of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the World leaders in 2000 in New York. The prevailing predicament of poverty has remained a nagging crisis of underdevelopment among Third World Nations, especially Africa States since independence. Africa has remained the poorest continent on earth despite the concerns shown by various National governments, Non-governmental Organizations, individuals, etc. in eradicating or reducing the level of poverty (Atagher, 2008).

In effect, it includes lack and deprivation of the necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, good healthcare, employment, affordable education (Bradshaw, 2006). Poverty humiliates and dehumanizes its victims (Ukpong, 1996 as cited in Arogundade, et al., 2011). Poverty limits the growth and development of a nation because it affects performance, productivity and prevents people from contributing meaningfully or effectively to economic growth because of a lack of skill and motivation. (Aigbakan. 2000). Due to the increase of poverty in our society, the government has always strived to ensure that adequate poverty reduction programs and policies are put in place to see that poverty if not eradicated in the country, or is reduced to a minimal level. (Zacheus & Omonigho, 2014). The reduction of poverty is one of the most difficult tasks facing many countries in the developing world (including Nigeria) where the majority of the population is considered poor.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) initiative by the United Nations (UN) is one of the efforts aimed at reducing poverty globally by the year 2015 (UNDP, 2009). According to the UNDP (2010) report, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) represent the world's commitments to deal with global poverty in its many dimensions. (Hassan, Patel, & Satherwaite, 2005 as cited in Lawal, et al. 2012) observed that MDGs represents a new attempt to increase effectiveness of development assistance in reducing poverty with a time-bound targets and strong commitment to monitoring progress. They pointed out that, to achieve these laudable MDGs objectives, it is imperative to address the need for water, sanitation, health care, schools, employment, and poverty crises especially among the less developed economies.

However, before the implementation of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nigeria, the level of poverty has remained high. According to the MDGs reports in 2010, more than 50% on Nigerias are living in absolute poverty. The National Bureau of Statistics (2012) corroborated this in its poverty profile that 69.0% of Nigerians in 2010 were living in absolute poverty, since then, poverty has increased considerably in Nigeria. The National Bureau of Statistics confirms that about 112 million representing about 67% of the country's

167 million population of Nigeria are living below the poverty line in 2013, and about 70% of the population is poor and about 4.6 million is unemployed (NBS, 2015).

The Global Hunger Index indicated that Nigeria was the 47th hungriest country in the World, as cited in (Bello 2012). Due to the prevalence of this issue in Nigeria's development, successive government have over the years, both at the Federal, State and Local government initiated and implemented various policies and programs aimed at reducing and elevating the socio-economic status of people, and consequently eradicating poverty in Nigeria. Some of these where: Operation Feed the Nation (OPF), Low Cost Housing, Family Economic Advancement Programme, and Better Life For Rural Women, National Directorate of Employment, National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), (NAPEP), and N-Power. Even with this wide array of programs. poverty reduction in Nigeria has remained an illusion.

For the purpose of this study, Millennium Development Goals (adopted international policy) is being examined in the study with more emphasis on the goal I which focuses on the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger and it has a relationship with other goals such as achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing maternal mortality, Improving maternal health.

Statement of the Problem

Today, no society has succeeded in eliminating poverty totally. Poverty has remained one of the serious global challenges posed to mankind. The menace of poverty can be felt all over the world from the degree of its manifestation on unemployment, corruption, starvation, conflict, crime, war, and the like (Chimobi, 2010). One cannot convincingly define or explain poverty until he or she passes through it, because it is often said that it is better felt than explained. However, economic indices focus on poverty as a lack of basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, and also the general sign of economic stagnation namely unemployment, low purchasing power, low productivity, low consumption, poor education, inadequate healthcare, etc. which often manifest in the vicious circle of poverty; A kind of vicious circle such as low income-low savings-low investment, (Anyebe, 2012).

Poverty reduction in Kogi State remained one of the most daunting challenges facing the state, especially in Idah and Ibaji LGAs today and it has continually remained at its lowest ebb because of the approaches, methods, or techniques employed in Reducing poverty in spite of the concerted effort made by the Government. The poverty level in Kogi State is High, The proportion of the pollution that is poor in Kogi State is said to be 77.7% (United Nations Multidimensional poverty index 2015). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS 2020), Kogi State has a poverty rate of 87.72, the state is one of the backward

State in the North-Central Geo-political zone of Nigeria where there is inadequate infrastructural development, especially in the rural areas where the majority of the people are poor. The rural dwellers who earn their living through farming, lack the support of the government in the areas of access to credit facilities, roads, potable water, electricity, primary healthcare, schools, skills, etc. Kogi State Government through the Conditional Grant Scheme of MDGs together with the state funds has embarked on farmers' empowerment, vocational skill training, drilling of boreholes, provision of healthcare services, etc, in Idah and Ibaji LGAs with the overall aim of increasing the income of poor, improving, nutrition, reducing hunger, and underweight.

Currently, the high incidence of poverty in Idah and Ibaji LGAs has indeed become critical and lack of poverty reduction efforts in the area can lead to conflict, violence, and crime, among others. The MDG through the Conditional Grant Scheme in Kogi State is said to have made efforts in training of 1000 people through vocational skills, distributed farm implements, rice milling machines, constructed 106 boreholes, and 23 primary healthcare services among others to reduce the poverty level in Idah and Ibaji LGAs (CGS MDG Kogi State, 2010).

Despite the implementation of Millennium Development Goal (eradication of poverty and hunger) and other government intervention programs geared towards poverty reduction particularly among the rural people in Idah and Ibaji LGAs, MDGs do not seem to have improved the standard of living in the area. Therefore, how can the government ensure the accuracy and effectiveness of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goal I, which is concerned with the eradication of poverty in Idah and Ibaji Local Government Areas of Kogi State?

The paradox between MDG and poverty reduction in Kogi State, especially in Idah and Ibaji LGAs has triggered the question as to why there still exists a high incidence of poverty in the state despite of the MDG's effort. This premise thus has necessitated an assessment of the effect of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals on poverty reduction in Idah and Ibaji Local Government Areas of Kogi State.

Methodology

The data for this study is generated through the secondary sources of data collection from journals, textbooks, materials from the internet, etc., and their content qualitatively analyzed.

This work which is pure content sifts through the mass of literature on millennium development goals, poverty reduction. Inferences and recommendations are made base on the findings of the study.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Concept of Poverty and Poverty Reduction

According to World Bank (2001), poverty is a pronounced deprivation of wellbeing related to lack of material, income or consumption, low level of education and health, vulnerability and exposure to risk, and no opportunity to be heard including powerlessness. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit.

According to United Nations Development Programs (UNDP 2006). Poverty is defines as a state of deprivation or denial of the basic choices or opportunities needed to enjoy a decent standard of living, to live a long , healthy, constructive life, and to participate in employment, social, political, and cultural life of the community. It also comprises a lack of participation in decision making and in civil, social and cultural life. Poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means a lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means insecurity, powerlessness, and exclusion of individuals, households, and communities, It means susceptlbajility to violence, and it often implies living in marginal or fragile environment, without access to clean water or sanitation.

Poverty reduction is about providing people with the capabilities to lives in dignity (UNICEF 2000). It means helping people with the support to live above poverty line. Poverty reduction is often used as a short-hand for promoting economic growth that will permanently lift as many people as possible over a poverty line (Barde, 2009). Also, (UNDP 2013). Sees it as a work to support Transformation changes which brings about real improvement in peoples lives. It is a set of measures which are either economic or humanitarian provided by the government or non-governmental organizations that are intended to permanently lift people out of poverty. It means improving the living condition of people who are hopeless, powerless, and those who are already poor.

a. Indicators of Poverty

The poverty profile or indices in Nigeria are alarming as past and present studies have shown that the majority of Nigeria's population is living in abject poverty.

According to Ojo (2008), Nigeria as a sub Sahara African Country, has at least half of its population living in abject poverty. Abiola & Olaopa (2008), States that the scourge of poverty in Nigeria is a controvertible fact, which results in hunger, Ignorance, malnutrition, disease, unemployment, poor access to credit facilities, and low life expectancy as well as general level of woman hopelessness.

According to NBS (2019), More than 82.9 million Nigerians lives on less than one dollar a day, that is, 40.1% of people in Nigeria lives in poverty this caused by a lack of basic amenities or social services such as lack of quality and affordable education, bad or inadequate health facilities, lack of potable water, underemployment and lack of employment opportunities to mention but a few. Similar to it, the publication of the Federal Bureau of Statistics (2010) reveals that poverty has been massive, pervasive, and engulfs a large proportion of the Nigerian society as cited in (Gore 2002; Aluko 2003).

b. Causative Factors of Poverty

Poverty is widespread in Nigeria, the majority of the Nigerian population is poor and mostly lives below one dollar per day because of several factors, among which are the effects of globalization, corruption, laziness, debt burden, unemployment, high population, insecurity, poor human development, macro-economic distortions. Out, et al (2011) attributed the causes of poverty to inadequate access to employment opportunities, destruction of natural resources, leading to environmental degradation and reduce productivity, inadequate assistance for those living at the margin and those victimized by transitory poverty and lack of participation, failure to draw the poor into the design of development; low endowment of human capital, government neglect, unviable developmental policies, inadequate grow rate of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), of which account for a higher level of poverty in Nigeria. Aliyu (2002) postulates that the takeover of government by military coups, embezzlement, nepotism, looting, bribery, vote-buying, and abuses of office are very common, thereby impoverishing the populace. In the same vein, Chimobi (2010), asserts that unemployment, corruption, non-diversification of the Nigerian economy (overdependence on oil and mono-economy), inequality, laziness, and low standard of education in Nigeria are some of the key causes of poverty in Nigeria.

Mohammed (2008) also attributes the causes of poverty in Nigeria to corruption and embezzlement, poor leadership, inadequate commitment to program implementation, wrong agricultural policies and protracted neglect of the sector, lack of basic infrastructures such as (potable water, quality health facilities, electricity), high or rapid population growth. Over the years, social conflict and crisis in Nigeria have also impacted negatively on the well-being of

individuals both economically and other-wise. The resultant effects of conflict in Nigeria are enormous; it pervades all the sectors of the economy, thereby causing serious poverty in Nigeria. There is a serious re-occurrence of crisis in Kogi State especially that of Idah and Ibaji Local Government Areas. The net effects of conflict and instability in the state are absolute poverty, Death, and lack of development. The high rate of restiveness, bloodshed, and communal crisis in Nigeria has caused a serious setback in the economy and has consequently increased the rate of poverty. A study by the Institution for Peace and Conflict Resolution shows that the unfortunate occurrence and reoccurrence of social conflict or crisis in our various localities in Nigeria has contributed immensely to the deterioration of the poverty situation, not only in the affected areas, but also in the areas that received the influx of displaced person, (Otu, et al 2011).

Millennium Development Goal I (MDG) Targets and Reports: The Nigeria journey with the MDGs started in September, 2000 in New York with the signing of historic millennium declaration along with other 189 countries at the millennium summit. During the period, Nigeria was under a debt burden of about 35.9 billion dollars with over 85% owed to the Paris Club (Igbuzor, 2011). As part of the global consensus, the Federal Government of Nigeria adopted the Governments. The Conditional Grants Scheme (CGS) to ensure the nation's success in meeting the MDGs goals. The majority of the activities that required meeting the MDGs were the responsibility of State and Local Government such as management of primary healthcare facilities, allocating teachers to schools, water supply schemes, and empowering the rural areas among others. Through CGS, the Federal Government has been providing additional funding to support State and Local Governments in attaining MDGs.

Nigeria, a Member of the UN keyed into the implementation of the framework of the goals of MDGs, (Abur, et al., 2013). MDGs are aimed at reducing the number of people who live on less than a dollar in a year by 2015 by pursuing the eight goals. They are: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promotes gender equality and empower women reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, HIV AIDs, ensure environmental sustainability, and develop a global partnership for development. The target of MDG 1 is to reduce by halve the proportion of people living on less than one dollar a day by 2015, and those suffering from hunger and underweight.

According to the United Nation Development Programme (2006), the number of people living in poverty declined from 65.6% in 1996 to 54.4% in 2004, while 35 out of 100 people live in extreme poverty and 30 out of 100 children are under-weight, The international

indicator for extreme poverty has stated that 70.2% of Nigerians live on less than one dollar and the proportion is still increasing.

Achievements of MDGs I in Idah and Ibaji LGAs In line with the aim of MDG I, eradication of extreme poverty, free all men, women, and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of poverty, the state has made significant achievements in the vocational skills training, farmers' empowerment, water among others. According to Kogi State CGS (2009) reports, six hundred small ponds have been distributed to farmers, farming implements, improved seedlings, thousand were trained in furniture making, electrical installation, welding among others.

Also, a total of 106 boreholes were provided, 23 primary health care centers were constructed in Idah and Ibaji LGAs to mention but a few. Out of which 55 boreholes and 13 clinics were constructed in Idah LGA, while 51 boreholes and 10 clinics were constructed in Ibaji LGA (MDGs CGS Report Kogi State 2007-2013). The MDGs programs were coordinated and implemented by the MDGs state focal officer and the desk officers of the two local government areas.

Challenges of MDG I in Idah and Ibaji LGAs The federal, state, and local governments have made great efforts in meeting the MDGs by reducing poverty in Idah and Ibi LGAS and the country at large. There are, however, some problems militating against the effective implementation of the MDGs. There are several constraints associated with MDGs and poverty reduction in Kogi State and these objectives of eradicating poverty, underweight, and hunger. Some of these constraints are:

Inadequate funding, Mismanagement of funds and corruption are the major constrains of MDGs in Kogi State.

Insufficient funding has affected the execution of MDGs in Kogi State and the little funds for the MDG programs and projects are either mismanaged or side funded.

(Ooms & Stuckler, and Basu & Mckee 2010 cited in Okeke & Nwali 2013), lamented not achievable in many de that insufficient finance has had a serious effect on the execution of MDG programs. They further added that many goals of MDGs are no achievable in many developing countries (Nigeria) as a result of inadequate temporary nature of financing of the MDGs as well as coordination of the aid delivery.

During the MDGs implementation period, the two local government areas witness so many social conflict/crisis which has impacted negatively on the well-being of individuals both economically and other-wise. The resultant effects of conflict in Idah and Ibaji local

government areas are enormous, it pervades all the sectors of the economy, thereby causing serious poverty and discontinuity in MDGs projects in areas.

There are many MDGS projects abandoned, and some were destroyed in the Local Government Areas as a result of long age crisis. There is a serious re-occurrence of crisis in Kogi State especially that of Idah and Ibaji Local Government Areas. The net effects of conflict and instability in the State are absolute poverty, death, retrogression, and lack of development. The high rate of restiveness bloodshed, and communal crisis has caused serious dislocation in the economy and has consequently increased the rate of poverty and distortion of projects in the areas.

Political instability is another challenge of MDGs in Idah and Ibaji LGAs and the country at larg, Series of political changes leading to political instability has often led to discontinuity in the planned programs, total re-arrangement of priorities as no progress can take place in a country that is beset with political instability (asamu & Adedoyin 2014). In addition, other challenges and corruption, over politicization of the program by the government, lack of conceptualization of the projects, and they lack continuity in both the Local Government Areas.

According to Garba (2006) All poverty reduction initiatives in Nigeria since independence have yielded very little fruit. He lamented that the programs were mostly not designed to reduce poverty, they lack a clearly defined policy framework with proper guidelines for poverty reduction, they suffer from political instability, interference in policy, and macro-economic dislocations, they lack continuity and they are riddled with corruption, political deception, outright kleptomania, and distasteful looting. World Bank (1996) as cited in Oshewolo (2011) reported that the safety nets in the country are ineffectively managed and do not reach the intended beneficiaries. They have not been successful, as they have failed to include intended beneficiary communities in the design and execution of the safety net programs.

Finding and Discussion

From the review of literature in the study, it was discovered that poverty is the inability of an individual to attain the minimum standard of living. The primary aim of MDGs is to significantly reduce the incidence of poverty, free all men, women, and children from the shackle of poverty and hunger, and to improve the living conditions of people in Nigeria.

However, MDGs do not seem to influence the socio-economic lives of the poor especially in rural areas, and where impact is made, the level is insignificant and minimal hence it had little effect on the poor and the economic growth of the state and the country at large.

The reasons why MDGs and most of the poverty reduction programs have no positive impact on the majority of poor persons in the rural areas or local government areas (Idah and Ibaji) are due to several reasons such as social conflict crises, haphazard implementation, lack of adequate sense of commitment, corruption and mismanagement, political instability, lack of transparency, inadequate coordination of efforts by parties that contributed to poverty reduction programs in Nigeria, poorly targeted among others, (Zacheus, & Omonigho: 2014, Obadan: 2000, Oshewolo: 2010).

Recommendations

The government should try by all means to create conducive atmospheres that will reduce conflict and social crisis. On issues of mismanagement and corruption, the culture of corruption in the official and public sector would have to be addressed. To effectively address the problem, the much-publicized anti-corruption posture of the government would have been strengthened.

The activities of the various anti-corruption agencies such as the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), require Institutional energization.

Again, there is a need for value re-orientation among the populace. The government should ensure that individuals indicted for corrupt practices must not be allowed to hold any public offices and must be dealt with accordingly.

There should be transparency by the government and the coordinator of MDGs, and other poverty reduction programs. Government should ensure adequate political stability and adequate coordination of efforts by parties that contributed to poverty reduction programs. Finally, governmental at all levels (federal, state, and local government) must come up with genuine poverty reduction programs if the challenges of poverty must be tackled.

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