



THE IMPACT OF N-POWER PROGRAMME ON FOOD POVERTY REDUCTION OF BENEFICIARIES IN OREDO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, EDO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The plan by former president Muhammadu Buhari to lift 100 million Nigerians out of endemic poverty by the year 2030 using appropriate social protection programmes and to know the extent to which this has been achieved through N-Power programmes necessitated the study. The objective of the study was to determine how N-Power worked to reduce the food poverty of beneficiaries in Oredo L.G.A of Edo State. The study leverages empowerment theory and the population of the study comprises N-Power batch A and B enrollees who served in Oredo L.G.A. of Edo State.. The researchers reviewed relevant literature in the area of the study and to have a robust knowledge of the subject matter of discourse the study utilised mixed methods of data collection which involved the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. Taro Yamani scientific tools were used to obtain an optimum sample size of 345 for N-Power batches A and B respectively. The hypothesis raised was tested with the Pearson correlation statistical method. Findings revealed that N-Power programme has improved the general standard of living of beneficiaries, and closed the food poverty inequality gap between beneficiaries against non-beneficiaries of the programme in the aforementioned local government area. The study recommends that Government should enshrine social protection programmes into the Nigerian constitution, Government at all levels should evolve different food intervention programmes such as food stamps, and food vouchers among others to address the biting challenges of food poverty in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Beneficiaries, Food Poverty, N-Power Programme, Oredo L.G.A, Reduction,*



INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognised the target of ‘ending poverty in all its forms everywhere’ as its first goal, and ending food poverty is a basic requirement of the (SDGs). Food poverty is the most common form of destitution (Walton, 2020). People living in food poverty cannot afford the necessary food to live a healthy life and are forced to forgo food to afford non-food essentials. By ending poverty in all its forms no one should remain in food poverty by 2030 (Walton, 2020). Food poverty is a lack of the means to obtain enough food to live. People living in food poverty have an income or expenditure that is less than the amount needed to constantly afford a basket of food with minimum recommended nutritional intake. The cost of this basket is called the food poverty line (FPL). People living below the FPL are not able to afford the cost of food necessary for good health and are in danger of malnutrition, disease, or ill health (Walton, 2020).

Food poverty according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations is a state when a person lacks regular access to enough safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy life. Food

poverty could be severe or moderate among a population, which now represents an instrument to monitor the world’s progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG2) which is all about creating a world free of hunger by 2030. Furthermore, citizens experiencing moderate food poverty have reduced the quality and or quantity of their food and are uncertain about their ability to obtain food due to a lack of money or other resources. Moderate food poverty can increase the risk of some forms of nutrition, such as stunting in children, micronutrient deficiencies, or obesity in adults. People experiencing severe food poverty are those who have run out of food for days without eating. This group of people are those who are referred to as being hungry (Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations, 2021).

Further to the above, Governments at different times in the Nigerian federation have evolved a series of social protection policies to end food poverty, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture ventures (Irele, 2011). For example, the Military administration of General Olusegun Obasanjo in the year 1976 launched Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) with the major thrust of using the programme to reduce food poverty, increase agricultural



production, popularize farming, provide an essential infrastructural base for all categories of farmers and agro-allied industrialists through the provision of the essential and critical inputs subsidies which had absent (Nwosu, 1990). In a similar vein, the civilian regime of Alhaji Shehu Shagari in 1979 introduced the Green Revolution Programme (GRP), following the administration's desire to reduce food poverty by boosting agricultural production and ensure Nigeria attained self-sufficiency in basic food production in five years and return to its green old days when Nigeria was a leading exporting country in food production before oil boom era (Anikpo, 1985). More so, the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI) as well as the Better Life for Rural Women were also established by the Military regime of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida with the mandate of substantially improving the quality, value, and nutritional food intake of the citizens among others (Nwosu, 1990).

To reduce the threat of food poverty by way of increased agricultural yield, The Agricultural Anchor Borrowers Programme was initiated by President Muhammadu Buhari in November 2015. This initiative saw the distribution of 43.9 billion naira to 200,000 farmers throughout the

federation to pursue the cultivation of eight agricultural commodities, namely: rice, wheat, soya beans, cotton, groundnuts, poultry, and fish farming (Mojeed, 2022). This programme was executed by the Central Bank of Nigeria and thirteen participating institutions (Zhizhi, 2018).

Furthermore, a sister's programme known as "farmers moni" also came on board to empower farmers with soft loans (FarmerMoni, n.d). In addition to the above, the federal government of Nigeria introduced the school feeding programme and the goal is to ensure that every child currently going to school in Nigeria today is well-fed with a balanced diet (Zhizhi, 2018). Consequently, the civilian administration of President Muhammadu Buhari inaugurated the N-Power programme a component of the National Social Investment Scheme (N-SIP) in 2016 with the objectives of reducing endemic food poverty, reducing youth unemployment, and creating wealth among others. In light of the above, this study intends to evaluate the impact of N-Power programmes on food poverty reduction of beneficiaries, from 2016 to 2021 using Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State as a case study.

Statement of the Problem

Past and present governments in Nigeria have come up with a series



of social protection intervention programmes with the sole aim of tackling extreme poverty, and reducing food poverty inequality among others which are intrinsically linked to food poverty reduction. This is why President Muhammadu Buhari 2016 launched the N-Power Programme a component of the National Social Investment Programme (N-SIP) to lift 100 million Nigerians out of extreme poverty by the year 2030.

However, eight years after the launch of the National Social Investment Programme there are disturbing statistics that show that the menace of food poverty is still widespread in Nigeria. For instance, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization reported that 144 million people including 385,000 IDPs in 21 states and Abuja were already in food poverty owing to the food crisis. More so, the 2022 Global Hunger Index shows that Nigeria has been ranked 103 out of 121 countries, a position that signifies that the nation has a level of hunger that is serious (Adebowale, 2022).

It is against the backdrop that this study intends to answer the following questions. To what extent has the N-Power Programme reduced the food poverty of beneficiaries in Oredo L. G. A. of Edo State?

Research objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

- (i) ascertain the extent to which N-Power programme has reduced food poverty of beneficiaries in Oredo L. G. A. of Edo State.
- (ii) make appropriate policy recommendations to policymakers on how to reduce food poverty in Nigeria.

Hypothesis

Following the objectives above, the hypothesis was tested.

Ho1 There is no significant relationship between N-Power programme and food poverty reduction of beneficiaries in Oredo L. G. A. of Edo State.

HR1 There is a significant relationship between N-Power programme and food poverty reduction of beneficiaries in Oredo L. G. A. of Edo State.

Empirical Review

Adegbenle (2019) examined the Social Investment Programme and Governance in Nigeria with a critical focus on Youth Empowerment Scheme and Food Poverty Reduction since the inception of the Fourth Republic in Nigeria. The study revealed that successive governments that have ruled Nigeria since 1999 are



generally not interested in eradicating the spate of poverty in the country through various poverty alleviation programmes and youth empowerment schemes. Rather, each successive government partakes in a lavish venture to subsidize or alleviate the miserable existence of the country's poor people. This is consequent upon the fact that most of the programmes have weak or no establishing Acts of parliaments. Therefore, enrollees are not formally part of the public service, hence any new government can easily scrap existing empowerment programmes. The study also finds out that the stipends paid to empower the youth do not correlate to anything substantial to lift the youth out of relative or extreme poverty but rather subsidize their suffering for the duration of the programme to fulfill populist campaign promises and to also cushion public grievances to win elections. The paper concluded that poverty would continue to be a national problem insofar as elites remain incompatible with the masses. The author is commended for his blunt and radical disposition that empowerment and poverty alleviation schemes are vote-catching tools used by political gladiators to get votes from the masses. The study is criticized for not evaluating the impact of social protection programmes on enrollees with due regard to youth

empowerment and poverty reduction since the inception of the Fourth Republic. It is against this background that this study will correct such weaknesses.

Ekong, Effiong, and Ekong (2021) examined the different Social Policies and Food Poverty Reduction put in place by different governments in Africa, using Nigeria as a window to study the entire continent. The authors explore the different welfare and social strategies directed at fighting the muster of impoverishment in Africa, by using the sovereign state of Nigeria as a window. The authors reviewed nine social policies used by the Nigerian administration to suppress the scourge of food poverty and assess their outcomes. These social policies included: the Trader Moni initiatives; and the N-Power Programme among others. Findings revealed mixed feelings on the extent to which welfare initiatives have been able to address the drawbacks of poverty. While promoters of the social policies push for the success of the programme, beneficiaries differ by pointing to the weakness of the programme owing to the visible shortcomings associated with the zone amongst others. It was however recommended that the need to blend welfare programmes among competing factors to have a robust and water-tight synergy to



address the fundamental course of poverty in the continent of Africa is important.

Akujuru and Enyioko (2019) examined the effect of Poverty Alleviation within the purview of the N-Power Programme in Nigeria, with specific attention on Port Harcourt. The secondary source of data was utilized for the study. The study revealed that only N-Power intervention programme is the only government initiative used in addressing the different local governments that make up River State. The study further revealed that a strong relationship exists between N-Power programmes and poverty alleviation in Port Harcourt as well as empowerment of the youths and N-Power programmes. It was however recommended that well-meaning and concerned authorities endeavour to invest in rural development through N-Power programmes. More so, federal, state, and local governments must work hard to reactivate ailing enterprises and increase the number of N-Power participants. Though the authors established a relationship between the youth empowerment programme and the N-Power Initiative but failed to show the extent to which the N-Power programme has successfully alleviated poverty in River State and Nigeria in general.

Alade, Longe, Oluwatosin, James-Ojibo, Asiyani, and Awoyemi (2020) conducted a study in Kwara State, Nigeria on the Perceived Effect of the N-Power Scheme on Food Poverty Reduction among Graduate Youths. Suitable sampling techniques were deployed to select hundred and sixty-four (264) respondents across five local government council areas of the State. The research findings established the huge impact of the N-Power programme on food poverty reduction of all the categories of N-Power beneficiaries, which were visible in their living standard, improved income, skill development, social interaction, and increased food availability amongst others. The research concluded that intervention programme have impacted significantly on the food poverty decrease of beneficiaries in the area of study and therefore recommended that government should put an action plan in place to incorporate outstanding N-Power participants into the mainstream public service of the various levels of government, reduction of any possible form of political interference on the part of federal government forthwith, the government should deepen its effort to lift rural infrastructural development through N-Power programme as it is the key for infrastructural development in the rural community amongst others.



The authors of this work are commended for the bold recommendations that governments at all levels should think inward so that they can employ qualified N-Power enrollees into the core public service of the different levels of government.

Understanding N-Power Programme

The N-Power scheme is one of the Social Investment Programme inaugurated by the Buhari administration on the 8th of June 2016 with the objectives of addressing the challenge of youth unemployment, increasing social problems amongst Nigeria youths to acquire and develop long-lasting skills for self-reliance to contribute its quarter to the overall development and growth of Nigeria and above all to reduce poverty. The scheme involves the temporary recruitment of unemployed graduates and non-graduates between the ages of 18 and 35 to work mainly as teachers for a minimum period of two years during which they are paid #30,000 monthly stipends. Beneficiaries are selected from the 36 states of the federation after an online assessment test via an online recruitment portal. Successful candidates are deployed to the state of residents where they are managed and supervised by an N-Power state focal person. So far, more than five

hundred thousand (500,000) Nigerian youths have benefitted from the scheme spanning between batches A, B, and C since its inauguration in 2016. The N-Power programme can be categorised into six components namely: N-Teach, N-Health, N-Build, N-Creative, N-Agro, and N-Tax. (Akande, 2020).

Causes of Food Poverty in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the causes of food poverty are multidimensional and multifaceted and are not traceable to one particular source. Below are the major ones.

1. Unemployment

The chronic unemployment situation owing to youth joblessness is one major factor that brings about food poverty in Nigeria. In recent times, Nigeria's population has increased without corresponding economic growth, resulting in strong competition among job seekers for the few available jobs. Oftentimes, employment in Nigeria is given to the highest bidder or those who are highly connected (Ibrahim & Uchedu, 2020).

2. Corruption

This has created a huge setback in nearly all aspects of our daily lives and it is evident in all sectors of the Nigerian economy. Most worrisome is the misapplication and misappropriation of funds meant for developmental purposes by public officials: for personal use or self-aggrandizement, leaving millions of



Nigerians to wallow in perpetual poverty due to a lack of basic infrastructures (Taiwo & Agwu, 2016).

3. *Non-diversification of economy*

Nigeria is a mono-economy that has relied solely on the oil and gas sector for decades. Other sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and mines among others that have the potential to create millions of jobs are left undeveloped. This has exacerbated the incidence of food poverty in Nigeria (Taiwo & Agwu, 2016).

4. *Income disparity*

One of the causes of food poverty in Nigeria is the wide imbalance between the affluent and the impoverished. This is the reason the affluent are expanding their economic fortune and the impoverished getting more impoverished (Ibrahim & Uchedu, 2020).

5. *Insurgency and terrorism*

The senseless act of killings by disgruntled elements in Nigerian society has increased the incidence of food poverty in recent times, leaving regions where terror activities are high to be vulnerable. Such acts have also prevented farming activities in agrarian communities where terror activities are dominant, resulting in food poverty (Taiwo & Agwu, 2016).

Overview of some Food Poverty Reduction Programmes

Different countries across the globe have deployed different social protection programmes to reduce the challenge of food poverty and extreme hunger among their citizens. Some of these social interventionist programmes are examined below:

Nutrition Supplementary Assistance Programme (NSAP) was formerly called food voucher in the US and it is run concurrently by the different States of America Federation with the sole aim of providing voucher cards to those at the lower economic pyramid to assist them in procuring quality and nutritious food. Millions of Americans use voucher cards to stock their homes with food year in and year out and it has proven to have pulled millions of Americans out of food poverty. Close to the programme above are the other two programmes called the Special Supplementary food programme for Women, and Infants and Children (WIC). This programme offers all consumables for a woman and her kids to survive healthily until they grow up to age five. The services rendered by WIC include the provision of affordable food items, educational materials, and support. Others include vouchers, breastfeeding, and postpartum services, and health referrals for pregnant women among others (ScienceDirect, 2023).



Also, the Child Nutrition Programme is an initiative that houses the National School Lunch programme, the School breakfast programme, and the summer food service programme and both are operational during normal school sessions and when it is closed for the summer (Congressional Research Service, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the Empowerment theory as propounded by Barbara (1976) in his book titled *Black Empowerment: Social Work in Oppressed Communities*. The thrust of this theory seeks to ensure that people have the appropriate skills, capabilities, resources, and access to secure sustainable income for a decent livelihood. The theory is relevant to the study in the sense that, this study is predicated on the fact that empowerment serves as an emancipating process in which the extremely poor, disadvantaged, vulnerable individuals, the down-trodden and the socially excluded persons in the society are well informed to exercise their rights, obtain access to resources and participate actively in the process of shaping society and making decisions (Luttrel, Quiroz, Scrutton & Bird, 2009).

The inauguration of N-Power by President Muhammadu Buhari is therefore designed to strengthen the

poor, reduce inequality, and empower the citizens who have no legitimate means of livelihood to develop their full potential, be self-reliant, and have the self-confidence to be solution providers. N-Power programme has helped tremendously to reduce food poverty and food poverty inequality and check economic inequality and social exclusion. Beneficiaries of these programmes through the skills acquired and capital raised have been able to establish themselves. They have also been able to contribute positively to the overall economic growth of the society at large (Akujuru & Enyioko, 2019).

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed method of data collection which involved the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. The population of the study consisted of the batches A and B N-Power beneficiaries that served in Oredo Local Government Council Area numbering 2533, the sample size determined by Taro Yamane formula amounted to 345. Using the proportional representation, the researcher calculated the proportion of N-Power Batch A and B beneficiaries respectively in the derived sample size.

Thus *N-Power Batch*

$$A = [968/2533]100 = 38\%$$

N-Power Batch

$$B = [1565/2533]100 = 62\%$$



Translating this proportional size in terms of the sample size of 345 will yield

$$N\text{-Power Batch A} = [38/100 \times 345 = 131]$$

$$N\text{-Power Batch B} = [62/100 \times 345 = 214]$$

Table: 1 Population and Sample Distribution Table

N-SIP	N-Power Beneficiaries	Proportional sample size using the Taro Yamni Scientific approach for each of the batches
Batch A	968	131
Batch B	1565	214
Total	2533	345

Source: Edo State N-SIP 2024 & Field Survey, 2024

Sampling Procedure

Closed-ended structured questionnaires were administered to exited Batch A and B N-Power beneficiaries at Oredo Local Government Area on their post-exit monthly meeting day using simple random techniques whereby every 7th respondent on the N-Power Batch A and Batch B deployment list was randomly administered with questionnaires. This put the total

sampled respondents to 345. Therefore, 340 of these questionnaires were meticulously filled and returned.

Findings

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between the N-Power programme and food poverty reduction of beneficiaries in Oredo L. G. A. of Edo State.

Table 2: N-Power programme has greatly helped in the food poverty reduction of beneficiaries in Oredo L. G. A. of Edo State.

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	110	32
	Agree	159	48
	Disagree	45	13
	Strongly Disagree	26	7
	Total	340	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2024



Table 2 shows that 32% strongly agreed that the N-Power programme has greatly helped in the food poverty reduction of beneficiaries, 48% of the sampled respondents agreed, 13% respondents disagreed, while the remaining 7% strongly disagreed that the N-Power programme has greatly helped in food poverty reduction of beneficiaries. The analysis thus established that the majority of the sampled respondents agreed that the N-Power programme has greatly helped in the food poverty reduction of beneficiaries.

Correlation

Table 3: Correlation between the N-Power programme and food poverty reduction of beneficiaries in Oredo L. G. A. of Edo State.

Correlations

		N-Power Programme	Food Poverty Reduction
N-Power Programme	Pearson Correlation	1	.985**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	340	340
Food Poverty Reduction	Pearson Correlation	.985**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	340	340

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table: 3 established that there exists a significant relationship between the N-Power programme and the food poverty reduction of beneficiaries in Oredo Local

Hypothesis Testing

1. Ho1: There is no significant relationship between the N-Power programme and food poverty reduction of beneficiaries in Oredo L. G. A. of Edo State.

H_{R1}: There is a significant relationship between the N-Power programme and the food poverty reduction of beneficiaries in Oredo L. G. A. of Edo State.

Table 3: Correlation between the N-Power programme and food poverty reduction of beneficiaries in Oredo L. G. A. of Edo State.

Government Area of Edo State with a correlation coefficient Rvalue of 0.985, indicating that the N-Power programme has a strong influence on food poverty reduction of



beneficiaries in Oredo L. G. A. of Edo State. Furthermore, with the p-value (Sig = 0.000) less than ($<$) 0.01, the study thus rejected the null hypothesis (There is no significant relationship between the N-Power programme and food poverty reduction of beneficiaries in Oredo L. G. A. of Edo State) and accept the hypothesis (there is a significant relationship between N-Power programme and food poverty reduction of beneficiaries in Oredo L. G. A. of Edo State).

Discussion of Findings

The study established in hypothesis one of this study that the N-Power programme has a strong significant impact on food poverty reduction of beneficiaries against the non-beneficiaries in Oredo L. G. A. of Edo State with a strong correlation coefficient R -value of .985, with the p -value (Sig = 0.000) less than ($<$) 0.01.

In line with the aforementioned finding, Sharaunga, Mudhara, and Bogale (2016) argued that the relationship between the N-Power programme and the food poverty reduction of beneficiaries is brought about by household empowerment which is very crucial for food poverty reduction, coupled with the enormous potentials of promoting food security among rural households. Empowerment theory

can easily be related to the above findings. The utility of this theory to the study case speaks volumes of how the N-Power programme has empowered beneficiaries to obtain access to food resources resulting in food poverty reduction of beneficiaries. The way and manner N-Power programme has reduced food poverty of beneficiaries can be seen in Table (1), of this study which shows that the majority of the respondents agreed (80% both strongly agreed and agreed) that the N-Power programme has contributed immensely, resulting in improved welfare of all categories of beneficiaries in the areas of the standard of living, and availability of food leading to a sharp drop in food poverty. The views above were supported by some interviewees (N-Power beneficiaries & N-Power officials) who added thus:

The N-Power programme pulled me out of food poverty. Before the N-Power job, the highest salary I ever received from the private school I was teaching was #15,000. The stipend from the programme was like a double promotion to me. I thereafter placed myself on #15000 while I saved the difference. I was able to save five hundred thousand Naira



(#500,000) because my batch was the pioneer set. I started selling wholesale drinks from home before I rented a store. I can now afford 3 decent meals a day and even extend food support assistance to my parents and relatives. Since our exit from the platform, I have relied solely on the business. We are hoping that the Federal Government fulfills its plans of giving us an exit loan so that I can use it to expand the business and procure a Toyota Dyna truck to supply drinks (IDI, N-Power Coordinator, Oredo L. G. A., 4th February 2024).

Some N-Power enrollees shared their testimonies with me when they brought some food produce to me. They said they were able to set up their farms in their community from the savings they realized as an enrollee of the N-Power initiative. They made good sales when Garri had a good boom for three straight years. They stressed that they have no course to regret as they

channeled the sales proceeds from their farming venture to 'POS' business in their communities. They said the challenge of not having food to eat and borrowing money to buy other basic needs is now history in their lives (IDI, N-Power Schedule Officer, Oredo L. G. A. 31st January 2024).

Consequently, Aderonmi (2017) posited that many government programmes designed to alleviate poverty have helped to reduce food poverty but pointed out policy somersaults as the causes of the failure of such developmental programmes. The above submission aligns with the responses of an interviewee who responded as follows:

With the steady monthly stipends, I was able to support my home by buying plenty of foodstuffs and other food ingredients. The standard of living and the quality of food consumed in my family during my period as an N-Power beneficiary had a great boost (IDI, N-Power Asst. Coordinator, Oredo L. G. A., 2nd February 2024).



In a similar vein, the Director-General of N-Power in Niger State, Muhammed Usman hinted thus:

Aside social engagement of youths, the APC government of President Muhammadu has also used its SIP to boost the economy of the states across Nigeria and by extension reduce the food poverty of states. About 5100 youth were engaged in Niger state and posted across the state. For 24 months, the people are going to be paid #30,000 each. This means about 3.7 billion is going to be injected into the Niger State economy. In addition to this, another batch of 8000 persons is expected to be engaged soon. Niger State stands to have a total of 5.7 billion injected into its economy by the Buhari administration and the same goes to other states where billions are injected monthly as a result of SIP. The effect of all these injections is manifold. First, it will impact the state and national economy positively, and enhance the purchasing capacity

of N-Power enrollees and other citizens in the state. This will no doubt put food on the table and reduce food poverty on a broad scale for both N-Power participants and other members of society (Ogbette, Bernard & Okon, 2019).

The above government spending is crucial to enhance economic growth during the period of economic depression, even if it involves government borrowing. Consequently, it will be recalled that from 2016 to date, the Nigerian economy has gone into recession twice. Therefore, massive government spending such as the N-Power intervention scheme whereby billions of funds are injected into the economy is a better way out of such an economic imbroglio.

Ruminating on the explanation of poverty, the Central Bank of Nigeria (1999) opined that poverty is a condition whereby an individual is unable to cater to his or her necessities of life. Such as food, clothing, shelter, and lack of employment, education, and skills just to mention a few. But the N-Power programme, to a large extent, has helped in the reduction of the issue of poverty (food poverty) in Nigeria via the instrument of skills acquisition.



In a related development, an enrollee (N-Power beneficiary) speaks to the assertion above and states thus:

I am now an established vet. I benefited from N-Power under N-Agro. After extensive agricultural training in various agro-business, I started thinking of what to do since the government advised us from day one to start up something to become self-dependent. That is how 5 to 10 of us started a monthly contribution of #20,000. That is how I established my business in the area of veterinary medicine. I own a shop now and I have benefited from the scheme greatly. The challenge of food poverty is now a thing of the past. I have more to eat now and to give to friends and relatives. Thanks to President Muhammadu Buhari-led Federal Government (Okah, 2021a).

Further to the above, an interviewee expresses his views thus:

I was fortunate to be deployed to Taraba State Polytechnic, where I was attached to the HOD Electrical Department. He exposed me to the

rudiments and practical aspects of electrical work which I did not know before. This was made possible through several site and field electrical works. I must confess, I learned a lot from him. With the electrical skills, I acquired and the savings I realized, I opened an electrical shop. Also, I am a CEO now and I am into house wiring. Soonest, I will register my company so that I can bid for big electrical contracts. All these benefits culminated in improved well-being such that the challenge of malnutrition, family food insecurity, and poverty is now a thing of the past (Okah, 2021b).

In line with the submission above, a beneficiary of the N-Power Intervention Scheme also hinted as follows:

I benefited from N-Power under N-Health immensely in Bauchi State. The doctor I was attached to in the hospital I served, exposed me to several areas of health practice which hitherto I did not know of. To the Glory of God, I was trained in injury treatment, surgery, injection administration, and other



aspects. Before my deployment to the health facilities, I only had theoretical knowledge of health service provision. With the help of the doctors, I was able to gain robust practical knowledge in many areas of health management. I also channeled parts of my savings, I realized from the monthly stipends, to improve my farm yield. With these, I am self-dependent now and able to contribute to society. I can afford decent square meals now and fear of what to eat the next day is no more (Okah, 2021a).

Furthermore, an interviewee (N-Power official) stated thus:

During the N-Power Batch A and B service year, the N-Agro beneficiaries were trained regularly by Edo Agricultural Development Programme (EADP) officers on the modern techniques of farming and how to improve agricultural yields for farmers across all agricultural product value chains, which in turn transferred as an extension worker to farmers. Since their exit from the programme, many have set up their farms established agricultural outfits, and

served as consultants to farmers. This was made possible through the skills and knowledge they acquired while the N-Power programme was on. More so, the non-graduate component of the N-Power programme has trained many beneficiaries in different vocations ranging from masonry, carpentry, cake making, and welding. After that, start-up kits and financial support were given to them to establish their businesses. Today, they are self-reliant, food-secured (that is, food poverty reduction), and contributing meaningfully to the social economic growth of the society (IDI, Focal Person, Edo State Social Investment Programme Office, Programme Officer (N-Power) & Edo Agricultural Development Programme Office, 2nd February 2024).

N-Power as a national social investment of the Federal Government is aimed at job creation, skills acquisition, and youth empowerment through human capital development (Chukwudi, 2016). Therefore, one of the overall essences of the N-Power scheme was to reduce poverty by boosting



the human capital of the Nigerian labour force through empowerment programmes. Therefore, empowerment theory can be corroborated with the above assertion. In addition, empowerment theory posits that individuals have a combination of potential and skills that they refine through the process of training, learning, education, and empowerment. Consequent upon the above, Habib, Aamir, Khan, and Ullah (2020) stressed that youth empowerment through skills development plays a vital and significant role in poverty eradication, which pays them well enough, in the long run, to enable them to decrease their food poverty rate in the manner they can feed themselves from the money they earn from their skills, facilitate others in skill building and also help others to become financially empowered. The above submission bears testament to the major thrust of empowerment and social welfare theory that appropriate training in skills development is sure guaranteed to sustainable income and livelihood and by extension food poverty reduction. The above views were supported by some (N-Power beneficiaries) who added thus:

N-Power made me a proud farmer, after saving a good chunk of my monthly stipends. I ventured into

irrigation farming to support myself and my community. I have harvested and sold a good quantity of onions, vegetables, and watermelon. I have customers who patronize me often. I have made a lot of money from this farming business. I was able to further my education. This land where the business is located is mine and I have been able to employ others who are now working on the farm. I have more to eat now and to also share among other members of my community. I have defeated food poverty in this generation of mine and beyond (Okah, 2021a).

I was jobless and faced the challenge of being unable to eat two decent meals a day until I was listed in the N-Power programme in 2016. Now, I can eat well and even give food to my parents. I and members of my extended family are no longer faced with the challenge of food poverty (Okah, 2021b).

I teach Mathematics and Physics at Christ School Ado-Ekiti. I was



unemployed after graduation in 2010. N-Power gave me my first job. Before that time things were rough: to feed was a huge problem and life was practically difficult for me as a young graduate. But that is in the past now. With the #30,000 stipend I got monthly, I have been able to save money to start up some petty business which is equally helping me to take care of myself and my aged parents. What to eat is no longer an issue. Food poverty is now a thing of the past (Haruna, 2018).

It is, therefore, suitable to say from the above averments that social investment programmes such as N-Power have empowered (empowerment theory) beneficiaries with life-changing skills in the fight against food poverty in a developing country like Nigeria which has a high population of citizens.

Conclusion

With the data that came from the field and subsequent analysis of the same, the study made some discoveries. The study established, amongst others, that the N-Power initiative has greatly reduced food poverty and closed the food poverty inequality gap of beneficiaries as non-beneficiaries of the programme

in Oredo L. G. A. In the area of participants' well-being, the study observed a general improvement in the standard of living of beneficiaries. The study noticed further that many beneficiaries who could not feed adequately before their enrollment for the N-Power scheme were able to afford three decent square meals a day, extend food assistance support to friends and relatives, and also contribute to family life: a feat they were unable to achieve until they got N-Power job. The study also discovered that the N-Power scheme exposed many beneficiaries to acquire long-life practical skills and experience from the Agricultural Development Programme office in their various states of assignment which were very instructive towards self-employment and a potent weapon towards the sustainable fight against food poverty. For example, the study established that a good number of N-Agro beneficiaries who after receiving various forms of agricultural training in the agricultural value chains ventured into different Agro businesses, a development adjudged to have reduced food insecurity and food poverty in Nigeria (Ifatimehin, Isyak & Omale, 2020).

Sequel to the above, this study concludes that the social protection programmes introduced by President Muhammadu Buhari are an effective tool for food poverty



eradication and food poverty inequality reduction at the basic level of extreme hunger among others, consequent upon the fact that beneficiaries were able to move from one food poverty level to another compared to their previous status level before they were enrolled into N-Power programmes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made to serve as viable policy items for government officials, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations among others.

1. Government should develop the political will to gazette and enshrine social protection programmes into the Nigerian constitution so that the remarkable impact made so far can outlive the administration that introduced them.
2. Given the rising cases of food poverty and food poverty inequality, State and Local Governments across the Nigerian federation should be encouraged through improved budgetary allocation by the Central Government and other foreign partners to evolve programmes such as food vouchers, food subsidies, food fairs, mechanized farming among others as obtainable in developed west to reduce the

biting challenges of food poverty in Nigeria.

3. The government should do all within its power to reduce the menace of terrorism, armed banditry, and kidnapping among others so that farmers can confidently carry out their farm operations without the fear of being killed or kidnapped on the farm to make food products available for food consumption.
4. Government at all levels should develop a strong database (that is, social register) of the extremely poor, disabled, and other vulnerable groups who are in dire need of government intervention programmes: where potential beneficiaries of government food intervention programmes can be selected. This is to enable such interventionist programmes to get to those citizens that need them.



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