

# **ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL POVERTY ERADICATION PROGRAMME (NAPEP) AS POVERTY AND CRIME CONTROL MECHANISM IN NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

Poverty and crime has become a draconian monster confronting our society in all spheres. The incidences of poverty rose from 28.1% in 1980 to 65.6% in 1996 and have risen to more than 70% today. All of these have a direct bearing on the rate of crime in the country. Nigeria currently score low in terms of the widely accepted UNDP Human Development Index (HDI). This implies low level of overall societal welfare and development. This was the extent to which poverty and crime stood in Nigeria before the establishment of National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in 2001 by the then Obasanjo's administration to fight this draconian monster confronting the Nigerian society and be completely wiped out by year 2010. Having gone beyond 2010 with no end in sight to the challenges of poverty and crime in Nigeria, can we say NAPEP was a success story? Considering the enormous financial support the programme enjoyed nationally and internationally, does it reflect on the current rate of poverty and crime in the country? Has NAPEP truly addressed the pandemic of crushing poverty and crime in Nigeria as mandated fourteen (14) years after its establishment and operation? This paper assessed the impact of NAPEP as poverty and crime control mechanism in Nigeria. The paper relies on journals, books, conference papers, government official report, reports from international organisation, observations, as well as newspapers and magazines as source of data and relevant information. It is purely an evaluative research, carried out under the platform of the Marxist/conflict theory. The paper finds that the rate of poverty and crime is still high in spite of the fourteen (14) years of NAPEP fight against it. The paper therefore recommends adjustment of our political and economic system, provision of infrastructure as well as development of human capital among others as measures to addressing these challenges.

**Keywords:** NAPEP, Poverty, Poverty Eradication, Crime, Control Mechanism.

## **Prologue**

Nigeria with a population of 140 million people, landmass of 910.768sq km, oil reserve of 37 billion barrels, gas reserve of 185 trillion cubic feet, daily crude output of about 1.7 million barrels per day and enormous mineral and agricultural resources (Adoyi, 2011). As stupendous as all of these endowments are; Nigeria still remains one of the poorest, chaotic and fragile countries in the world.

The poverty profile in Nigeria shows that the incidence increased from 28.1% in 1980 to 43.6% in 1985, but declined to 42.7% in 1992 and rose again to 65.6% in 1996 (FOS, 1996). Since 1996, the country has been classified as a poor nation. The United Nations Human Development Indices (HDI) for 2001 ranked Nigeria the 142<sup>nd</sup> with HDI of 0.40 among the poorest countries.

The above analysis set the agenda for Obasanjo's administration to institute a panel chaired by Ahmed Joda to address the problem of crushing poverty in Nigeria which has a direct implication on crime and criminality in Nigeria (Mike, 2009).

The findings and recommendation by this presidential panel coalesced in the formation of the National Poverty Alleviation in 2000 and later National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in 2001. The target and core mandate of NAPEP was to completely wipe out absolute poverty from Nigeria by year 2010. Having gone beyond 2010 with no end in sight to the problem of poverty and crime in Nigeria, can we say objectively that NAPEP has been able to address her core mandate?

To actualise this task, this paper is organised in nine (9) sections: section one deals with the prologue while section two provide a conceptual explanations to

key concepts like: NAPEP, poverty, crime and crime control policy. The third section provides a theoretical framework for the paper. Here, the conflict/Marxist theory was adopted as the theoretical platform. In the fourth section, the paper examined NAPEP. When it all started, its mandate, fund, and achievement of the scheme. The fifth section provided an explanation on how poverty and crime are related. The sixth section deals with an impact assessment of NAPEP; section seven deals with the challenges confronting the scheme; section eight, provides recommendations to the crushing pandemic of poverty. The last section is an epilogue or conclusion.

### **Conceptualisation of Key Concepts**

NAPEP is an acronym for National Poverty Eradication Programme. Established in 2001 by the Obasanjo's administration on the recommendation of the presidential instituted panel on poverty prevalence; headed/chaired by Ahmed Joda. Its core mandate was to eradicate absolute poverty as its name implies by year 2010 (NAPEP, 2006). It was first headed by Dr. Magnus L. Kpakol and later by Muktar Tafawa Balewa.

The National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To coordinate and facilitate access to credit for the poor.
- ii. To enlarge the pool of micro credit facilities for the poor through partnership with key stakeholders
- iii. To encourage savings among the poor
- iv. To provide affordable interest rates for the poor
- iv. To stimulate increased economic activity in local government areas

- v. To generate commitment to NEEDs among local government and states officials for: poverty eradication, employment generation, wealth creation, value reorientation and to create a stronger tie between poor Nigerians, commercial banks and financial intermediaries.

NAPEP coordinated and oversees various other institutions, ministries and developing plans and guide lines for them to follow with regards to poverty eradication. Its goals include training youths in vocational trades, to support internship, to support micro-credit, create employment in the automobile industry, and help VVF patients. In terms of structure, the scheme was structured to integrate four sectoral schemes:

**YOUTH EMPOWERMENT SCHEME (YES)** which deals with providing unemployment youths opportunities in skill acquisition, employment and wealth generation. To achieve this, the scheme was further sub-divided into capacity acquisition programme, mandatory attachment programme and credit delivery programme.

**Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS).** The objective of this scheme was to ensure the provision of infrastructural needs in the areas of transport, energy, water and communication especially in rural areas. The scheme was broken into four parts: The rural transport programme; the rural energy program; the rural water programme; and the rural communication programme.

**The Social Welfare Service (SOWESS)** which was aimed 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 third scheme consists of four broad sub-categories which are: The

qualitative education programme, primary health care programme, farmers empowerment programme and social service programme.

**National Resource Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDS).** The vision of this scheme was to bring about a participatory and sustainable development of agricultural, mineral and water resources programme, solid minerals resources programme and environmental protection programme (Nigeria at 50: A compendium, 2010: 373).

The target of NAPEP as mentioned earlier was to completely wipe out absolute poverty from Nigeria by year 2010. The formulators of the programme identified three stages to the attainment of this ambitious target: The first stage is the restoration of hope for the poor people in Nigeria. This involves providing basic necessities to hitherto neglect people particularly in the rural areas. The second stage is the restoration of economic development and confidence. The final stage is wealth creation.

### **Funding**

NAPEP was funded from special deductions from the consolidated fund of the federal government and contributions from states and local government areas; private sectors and also donations from international donor agencies like: The World Bank, the United Nation Development Programme, the European Union, department for international development, the Japanese international cooperation agency and the German technical assistance.

Records has it that over N25 billion from 2001-2008 was received by NAPEP in its campaign against poverty in Nigeria. The then NAPEP boss and special assistance to the president Dr. Magnus L. Kpakol gave a breakdown of funds

received from various sources by the scheme since its inception in 2001 as follow:  
N11.8 billion as budgetary allocation, N10 billion from state government and commercial banks for multi-partnership programme and N8.2 billion from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This breakdown total N34 billion.

### **Achievement**

As a poverty eradication scheme, NAPEP was said to have been successful in the following areas:

- a. Every state today has a poverty eradication agency due to NAPEP's coordinating role and catalytic use of resources.
- b. NAPEP was said to have sensitized many state executive council and federal institutions
- c. The scheme has popularized the use of micro-credit which is today gaining popularity as an effective way to fighting poverty.
- d. It has caused state government to provide matching funds for on-tending to the poor.
- e. Has mobilized commercial banks to support the cause of fighting poverty. Some of the banks that have partnered with NAPEP include: former Oceanic bank, former intercontintal bank, former Fin bank and Unity bank. Unfortunately, only Unity bank is standing today among all these banks.

A 2006, NAPEP report has it that, their intervention in employment generation translated to the training of 100,000 youth, attaching 50,000 unemployed graduates in various places of work, training of over 5000 people in tailoring and fashion design, and the establishment of rural telephone networks in 125 local government areas. The establishment of 147 youth information centres across the

senatorial districts, the delivery of information for micro credit ranging from N10,000 to N50,000 and to N100,000, beneficiaries mostly women (NAPEP, 2006).

Another report in 2007 had it that, they successfully purchased and distributed 2000 unit each of keke NAPEP in all state of the federation at hire-purchase bases. Again are port in 2008 has it that, the scheme was able to train 130,000 youth and engaged 216,000 people. In 2014, NAPEP national coordinator and special assistant to the president Muktar Tafawa Balewa announced their successful disbursement of N1.5 billion to 200,000 poor people across the federation.

### **Understanding Poverty and Crime**

Poverty is deeply political. It has to do with crucial decisions in society concerning allocation and use of resources and how work and rewards are organized. These are patently political decisions and while it is true that economics underpins them, it is even more true that state power propels them (Ibeanu, 2004).

There is though no universally accepted definition among scholars on what poverty means. Be that as it may, poverty is a condition of not having enough to eat, poor drinking water, poor nutrition, unfit housing, a high rate of infant and child mortality, a low life expectancy, low educational opportunities, inadequate health care, lack of productive asset, lack of economic infrastructures and inability to actively participate in decision making process (NAPEP, 2001). Still on the bases of economic and social criterion Igbuzor, (2004) conceptualized poverty essentially as lack of access to basic needs, combined with impaired access to productive resources. The basic need include: nutrition shelter, water

and sanitation, health care, basic education, working skills, tools, security and political as well as civic rights. While Wreskinski, (2004) defines poverty as the absence of one or more assured capacities which permit individual and/or their families to carry out their basic responsibilities and enjoy their fundamental rights.

Although, poverty is multidimensional and multifaceted which include: political, social and ideological. Despite its multidimensional and multifaceted nature, poverty is not a natural condition nor are the poor makers of their own misfortunes or the victims of their own faults and weaknesses. Poverty is not due to individual shortcoming in personality or morality nor failure of family and upbringing. To argue as if it were, is to obscure the causes of poverty, justify its existence and detract from the responsibility for its eradication. Poverty as a matter of fact, is created by an uncaring international community, governments as well as societies. It is about unequal power relations and the ability of the few to oppress, suppress and exploit with impunity.

The term crime on the other hand, derived from the Latin word “crimen”, meaning offence and also wrong-doer. On the basis of this understanding, a public wrong is a crime which makes it an injury to the state even though the victim of the crime is an individual. Crime according to Marshall and Clark (1900/1952) in Smah, (2014) “is any act or omission prohibited by public law for the protection of the public, and made punishable by the state in a judicial proceeding in its own name.” It is a public wrong, as distinguished from a mere private wrong or civil injury to an individual.



Flowing still on the basis of law, crime is any action which contravenes the laws established by a political authority (Giddens, 2001). While Alubo, (2012) in a similar vein opined that crime is concerned with acts which are found in the law books, forbidden by the state and derived mostly from higher norms. From these understandings, it can be deduced that, crime is held to be an offence which goes beyond the personal and into the public sphere, breaking prohibitory rules or laws, to which legitimate punishments or sanctions are attached and which requires the intervention of a public authority (the state, or a local body).

### **Theoretical Framework: Marxist/Conflict Theory**

According to Reynolds, (1971) “a theory is a mental activity; it is a process of developing ideals that can allow scientist to explain why events occurs.” Theory from a broader perspective is a systematic set of principle that tries to explain how two or more phenomenon are related (Gay, 2000). It can also be defined as a set of related ideals which strive to explain trends of things or occurrences of phenomena in the universe.

However, the nature of social reality is so complex that every social phenomenon is subjected to various analyses and interpretations depending on the theoretical realm one falls, and there are as many theories as there are phenomenons. Be that as it may, for this paper, the Conflict/Marxist sociological theory was adopted to assessing the impact of NAPEP on the rate of poverty and crime in Nigeria.

The Conflict/Marxist theory championed by Marx (1883) and other Marxist like: Mosca (1965), Darendorf (1929); emphasized the importance of structures within society. It also advances a comprehensive model to explaining how society works. It equally highlights the importance of divisions in society. In doing so the theory

concentrate on issues of power, inequality and struggle. It tends to see society as composed of distinct groups pursuing their own interests. The existence of separate interests means that the potential for conflict is always present and that certain groups will benefit more than the others. The conflict/Marxist theorists examine the tensions between dominant and the disadvantaged groups within society and seek to understand how relationships of control are established and perpetuated.

Many conflict theorist trace their views back to the writings of Marx whose work emphasized class conflict, but some have also been influenced by Weber (1920). A good example is the contemporary German sociologist Darendorf (1959). In his classic work, “class and class conflict in industrial society”, he argued that, conflict just like the chief exponent – Marx, comes mainly from differences of interest that individuals and groups had. Marx saw differences of interest mainly in terms of class but Darendorf relates them broadly to authority and power. In all societies there is a division between those who hold authority and those who are largely excluded from it, and between rulers and the ruled.

The theory has though been highly criticised for it’s over determination and exaggeration of economic interest being a constant determinant for conflict that culminated to change. Again, critics of the theory have argued that, it is not all conflict that can necessarily lead to change.

But despite these constructive co criticisms, this theory is still for this study in that, the approach to eradicating poverty in Nigeria via NAPEP did not emerged from poor people that are expected to be pulled out from the ramshackle of poverty but from the elites; making them the beneficiaries of the programme and

the so called people that the programme was designed for hence the relevant of this theory to this paper.

### **Poverty and Crime in Nigeria**

Poverty is the mother of all crime. It has been defined as the lack of some fixed level of material goods necessary for survival and minimal well-being (Dambazau, 2009). It is measured by the quality and amount of food, clothing and shelter deemed necessary for a healthy life and usually involves a judgment of basic human needs, in terms of the resources required to maintain health and physical efficiency.

Although, poverty could say be the core rationale for crime causation, but could be a major contributory factor. The World Bank viewed the phenomenon as multidimensional and a situation in which people are unable to fulfil their basic human needs as well as the lack of control over resources. In establishing a link between poverty and crime Mbeki, (2009:106) asserts thus:

... poverty is not only expressed in shortage of food, shelter and clothing. It is also expressed ... in high levels of crime, including violence among the poor themselves, especially against women and children, in many instances accompanied by substance abuse.

Criminologists have emphasized and continue to re-emphasize how poverty could explain high crime rate. Early proponents of poverty causes crime theory includes: Guerry and Quetetef in early 1800s in France, who regarded poverty as absolute deprivation. The connection between crime and poverty is also popular among economist. Fajnzylber, (1987) for example while applying panel data for 45 developed and developing countries over the period of 1965 to 1995 found that, violent crime rate declined when economic growth improved.

According to the National Planning Commission (NPC) statistics about two – third Nigerians are poor. A condemned armed robber in Kaduna prison interviewed in 1987 at the height of robbery incidents was questioned as to what he believed to be the major causes of arm robbery in Nigeria. He identified poverty, poor or lack of education, unemployment and unnecessary arrogant display of wealth by the rich as the major factors. Another condemned armed robber in Benin prison within the same period also identified poverty, unemployment, breakdown of family values, and lack of discipline in schools as some of the factors (Dambazau, 2009).

In a study carried out at Abeokuta, Agodi and Kirikiri prisons, the conclusion by Odekunle (ND) was that, the typical criminal is illiterate, unskilled and unemployed. The research shows that between 86% and 89% of prisoners in the various prisons were unemployed at the time of their criminal offences.

As the rates of poverty in Nigeria (currently over 70%) continue to grow, the rate of crime occurrence have since been growing and changing faces too with all NAPEP fights against absolute poverty. Since 2006, kidnapping for ransom seems to have become a lucrative business. Kidnapping of expatriate oil workers, affluent personalities and their wards, started as a means of wresting concession as part of the struggle for better share of the national cake. Kidnapping has since spread all over Nigeria such that from 2010, it has become a main preoccupation of most youth that NAPEP was supposed to empower.

In November and December 2011, armed robbery became a major problem in Ogun and Oyo state. As a newspaper editorial puts it:

Matters have reached such a sorry pass that bank in a number of places including Abeokuta and Ijebu Ode in Ogun state and Ibadan in Oyo states shut their doors for days on account of the brazen manner that robbers have been raiding them (Daily Trust, 2011: 31).

The incidence of advanced fee fraud (419), trafficking, prostitution, terrorism (Boko Haram), etc. are not just in place, but increasing in momentum by the day in Nigeria with all NAPEP fight against these draconian monsters since 2001.

### **Assessment of NAPEP**

A scheme like NAPEP that has collected over N34 billion in allocations from the federal government and other donor agencies to carrying out its objectives should have a visible manifestation of its core achievement on ground in practical terms. A critical look at NAPEP highlighted achievement; the present rate of poverty (currently over 70%) in the country; the allocation and other special funds total over N34 billion are not in tandem. There is a significant gap between it that cannot be compared. Despite the plethora of poverty eradication by NAPEP in Nigeria, a world bank report indicated that Nigeria Human Development Index (HDI) is only 0.416 and about 70 per cent of her population are vegetating below the bread line.

A mathematical run down of the NAPEP success story in terms of the numbers of poor people the scheme was said to have either trained, provides jobs for, and or provide funds for in form of loans with the whopping sum of over N34 billion at their disposal further shows the failed nature of the programme. According to senator Kure, (2010) "NAPEP totally failed in its mandate despite gulping several billions of naira." Fourteen (14) years after its establishment and operations the agency could not effectively and efficiently impact on the lives of the less privilege Nigerians despite the huge resources committed to it through

appropriation and MDGs funds. All that was heard of the agency and its activities were only on media, and each of its numerous mouth-watering schemes like keke NAPEP ends with the grandeur on its official lunching.

Poverty rate has gone above 70 per cent in Nigeria today which was worse than 45 per cent in 2001 when the scheme was established. According to senator Lawan, (2010) in an article titled “Dismal performance of the National Poverty Eradication Programme,” when the programme was officially launched in 2001 by former president Olusegun Obasanjo, poverty rate was 45 per cent. By 2004, with NAPEP fighting poverty, it went up to 60 per cent and from 2008, poverty rate went up to over 70 per cent. NAPEP was a failed project. By these analyses the scheme only succeeded in fertilizing poverty, rather than eradicating it in Nigeria.

NAPEP being an executive creation not backed up by any act of parliament exposes the class ideology and philosophy behind its creation. Flowing from this assertion, the scheme was just a creation of an elitist class for the continuous domination of the poor class. This explains why the rate of poverty and crime in the country continue to increase in spite of the fight against it. This assertion also falls in tune with Herbert, (2004:119) argument:

... the prime obstacle to the elimination of poverty lies in an economic system which is dedicated to the maintenance and increase of wealth among the already affluent. Since capitalism is based on the maximization of profit rather than the satisfaction of human need, absolute poverty cannot be abolished within a capitalist society.

Even the appointments of NAPEP national coordinators was class oriented. First, it was Dr. Magnus L. Kpakpor (2001-2010), a US trained economist who knows less than nothing about the crushing pandemic of poverty in Nigeria because he

was never breed in this environment. And later MuktarAbubakarTafawaBalewa who was there until the programme was scrapped; I believe was born and breed with silver spoon in his mouth even if he was breed in this environment, he belong to a class different from the poor people that he was mandated to pull out of poverty.

### **Challenges that Militated Against NAPEP**

Beyond the loss of cultural values in our society, lack of policy guidelines and fund identified by NAPEP as some of the challenges that militated against her mandate to fighting absolute poverty in the country, I think the challenges goes beyond the above highlighted. From our studies and assessment, the scheme major challenges are:

**Lack of Focus.** For an organisation like NAPEP that gouppeed over forty billion naira in her over eleven years fight against poverty and crime via multiple dimensional approaches without proper evaluation of results; and at the long run could not visibly manifest on the poor and the general rate of poverty and crime in the country and therefore failed to actualized her core mandate, shows clearly an organization that lack focus.

**Anti-People:** Taking a closer look at NAPEP objectives, and her various approaches to fighting absolute poverty in Nigeria, shows the anti-people nature of the scheme. Their approaches do not flow from the people. Just as leadership must emerge from the people and not from a particular class; poverty eradication programme like NAPEP should have emerged from the people like the case of Thailand. When the Thailand government announced its poverty alleviation policy in 2004, on the national agenda, it launched a nationwide poverty

registration programme which allows people all over the country to register their grievances and poverty nature. According to the outcome of the registration programme, more than eight million people came out to register a total of twelve (12) million cases of poverty. It was on the bases of this registration that their poverty eradication programme was drawn. People were divided into seven categories. Thailand poverty alleviation caravan project was planned after the nationwide poverty registration programme. The Thailand poverty eradication programme therefore, emerges or flows from the people hence its success contrary to NAPEP – Nigeria poverty eradication programme.

**Corruption:** Corruption greatly bedevils the NAPEP project. In executing one of their pet project tag keke NAPEP in 2007 which hit the rock, the agency was accused of fraud to the tune of N2.4 billion by the National Assembly. Again, most of NAPEP beneficiaries according to Chika, (2008) were the non-poor who were selected.

### **Conclusion**

There is no quick-fix to eradicating poverty in any society. And there is no moral justification for extreme poverty side by side with great wealth in a society like Nigeria. The happiest and most secured societies were those in which most citizens are independent. No republic could remain untroubled, if large numbers of citizens were economically marginalized.

This is what the federal government of Nigeria has failed to address via NAPEP. This account to why crime of all sort has not only remain with us in our country, but also escalating like wide fire, because NAPEP as a poverty and crime



control mechanism in Nigeria was a failed project and therefore, an effort in futility to eradicating absolute poverty and criminal activities in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

Given the non-performance of NAPEP and the non-realization of her core mandate to eradicating absolute poverty from Nigeria with all the resources invested in the project, this paper offers the following recommendations:

First, there is a need to adjust our political and economic system. Alleviating and eradicating poverty is not a concept or matter of semantic but rather the ideological practice in place. Alleviating poverty under a free market democratic system like ours is possible and achievable but not eradicating it; which is only possible under a social democratic system in place. We must therefore, be clear first, on the dimension to fighting poverty and what we want to achieve – alleviating or eradicating poverty? After which we can adjust our political and economic system to suit and align with our objectives to fighting poverty.

Second, all further fight to alleviating or eradicating poverty in Nigeria must be people oriented. It should flow from the people like the case of Thailand for visible result. The people know where the shoe pinches them. We cannot claim to proffering solutions to a problem such as this without knowing its nature and trend. This must flow from the people. Future poverty eradicating programmes should toe this line and not the NAPEP process. In the same vein, future management and coordination of any poverty fighting scheme must be headed by people who knows what being poor means and look like. There is a clear cut different between “I know and I understand.” The “I know group” should coordinate all future poverty fighting scheme.

Flowing from the above, the federal government of Nigeria in her future bid to either alleviate or eradicate poverty, should put in place a disciplinary evaluating and monitoring team to assess and examine every strategy and programme imbedded in the scheme to check if the scheme is making any appreciable progress and fulfilling her core mandate. If there are, how many of the poor people have been pulled out from the shackle of poverty within a given period of time and how many can still be pulled out within the same period with the same strategy, programme, efforts and resources. With this in place, future fight against this monster will not just be in the media displaying and showcasing abstract achievement. Instead every mechanism and resources channel towards the fight against poverty will align in practical terms with the achievements.

Finally, if the Nigerian government is serious in her bid to eradicate absolute poverty from Nigeria, without even establishing a scheme like NAPEP and channelling well over forty billion to it, such fund can be channel to construction of accessible roads; steady power supply; quality and affordable education; quality health care delivery services; creating and expanding investment opportunities; secured and dependable security system; etc. absolute poverty will naturally watered down among her people.

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