

Public Service and Poverty Eradication in Nigeria: An Assessment of National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), 2001-2011

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Received: February 3, 2012 Accepted: February 24, 2012 Online Published: October 18, 2012

doi:10.5539/par.v1n1p94 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/par.v1n1p94>

Abstract

The public service is the central machinery with which the state discharges its responsibility of governance. The success or otherwise of government depends to a large extent on the effectiveness of its public service. This paper assesses the impact of the public service on poverty eradication in Nigeria with a focus on National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) of the federal Government. The paper used content analysis for its data generated via the secondary sources; while relying on public choice theory as its theoretical framework. The findings revealed that, NAPEP has been able to assist only a fraction of poor Nigerians in various ways such as provision of loan; provision of cash assistance, Keke NAPEP and a few other programmes. However, the achievements of the organisation are quite insignificant when compared with the magnitude of poverty in Nigeria. This explains why the incidences of poverty has remained high (about 64.4%) among Nigerians. The paper contends that rent seeking behaviour of public servants is the major hinderance to effective service delivery in the Nigerian public service. A number of problem currently bedevilling the organisation and its activities include inadequate funding, operational problems, lack of independence in decision making among others. It is recommended that, the federal Government reviews the operational framework of the agency; and improves its funding in order to grant it more operational autonomy in the pursuit of its mandates.

Keywords: poverty, poverty eradication, public service

1. Introduction

The public service is indispensable tool for effective performance of government responsibility in every political community. This suggests that with a dependable public service, the objectives of public policies can be realised. Embedded in the above, is also the assumption that social problems as soon as identified by competent government officials would be addressed, and resolved. Poverty is one of such social problems confronting Nigeria and other countries around the globe. The problem of poverty remains a huge challenge to successive governments in Nigeria. Efforts to reduce poverty among Nigerians have been a long standing one with successive Nigerian governments devising different policy measures aimed at curtailing the incidence of poverty.

Notable among such policy measures include the Operation Feed the Nation (1976), the Green Revolution (1979), the National Directorate of Employment (NDE)(1986), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI)(1988), Poverty Alleviation Programme(1999), and a host of others (Idada,2003). While most of these policies/programmes were developed by different administration as regime strategies of mitigating poverty, a few were actually designed by one administration with one serving as a replacement to the previous. The latest in the list of such policies is the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) developed by president Olusegun Obasanjo in 2001 as an improvement on the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) of the same Government. In all of such programmes, the public services have important roles to play not only in their formulation, but also in their effective implementation.

It is about 10 years since the commencement of the implementation of NAPEP in Nigeria, but the incidence of poverty among Nigerians has not declined significantly. This paper, therefore examines the performance of NAPEP as the institutional framework designed to coordinate programmes aimed at the eradication of poverty among Nigerians between 2001 and 2011. The paper is divided into 6 sections, namely: introduction, Statements

of the problem, conceptual analysis, theoretical Framework, Roles and achievements of NAPEP, Discussions, Conclusion and Recommendations.

2. Statements of the Problem

The Nigerian public service is a creation of colonial administration. The various institutions in the Nigerian public administration were created to provide the colonial administrators the machinery to pursue the objectives and policies of colonial administration. The Nigerian public service has therefore play tremendous role in the governance of Nigeria both during the period of colonialism, and in the post colonial period. Indeed, the duty and responsibility of the public service in the post colonial era has widened. Perhaps, it is out of the desire to keep pace with its growing responsibility that the Nigerian public service has increased in its size. However, there is the concern that the fight against poverty in Nigeria is far from being over. In other words, in spite of the existence of several agencies and parastatals generally; and NAPEP in particular which is a federal Government anti-poverty agency in the last one decade, the incidence of poverty remains high.

Poverty in Nigeria continues to assume worrisome dimension in spite of several antipoverty programmes. According to Ojo (2008), Nigeria, a sub-Saharan Africa country has at least half of its population living in abject poverty. Similarly, the Federal Office of Statistics (1996) reveals that poverty has been massive, pervasive, and engulfs a large proportion of the Nigerian society. Similarly, the UNDP Human Development Report (2009) revealed that national poverty fluctuated from 28.1% in 1980, 46.3% (1985), 42.7% (1992), 65.6% (1996) and 54.7% in 2004, while rural poverty rose from 28.1% in 1980, 51.4% (1985), 45% (1992), 69.3% (1996), and 63.8% (2004). This situation has made analysts to describe the Nigerian situation as that of poverty in the midst of plenty. Abiola and Olaopa (2008), states that the scourge of poverty in Nigeria is an incontrovertible fact which results in hunger, ignorance, malnutrition, disease, unemployment, poor access to credit facilities, and low life expectancy as well as a general level of human hopelessness.

Among the comity of nations, Nigeria is ranked poorly. The UNDP Report (2010) covering a period of 2000-2008 indicated that 64.4% of Nigerians live below poverty line while the country occupy 142nd position out of 147 countries in human development index. The import of these figures is that in spite of the presence of NAPEP, poverty is still very prevalent among Nigerians. Oshewolo (2010:266), opined that “there is the geographical dimension of poverty in Nigeria. Poverty is higher in the rural areas than in urban areas”. In 2004, the urban population with access to water was 67%, while it was 31% in the rural areas. In terms of sanitation services, 53% of the urban population had access to sanitation services and 36% in the rural areas.

Again, this shows that poverty is more endemic in the rural areas than the urban areas. This revelation is more worrisome because the larger percentage of the Nigeria population actually resides in the rural areas. In view of these pathetic situations, this paper raises certain pertinent questions. How adequate is NAPEP as a public service agency in the fight against poverty in Nigeria? What are the achievements of NAPEP in the eradication of poverty in Nigeria? What are the challenges and problems bedevilling the institution in her efforts at the eradication of poverty in Nigeria?

3. Conceptual Analysis

3.1 Public Service

The public service can be seen simply as the administrative machinery with which government discharges its functions. However, technically speaking, the term has attracted different opinion. Vambe (2008) argues that, the term public service could be conceptualised in two ways. First, it refers to the body of officials that are involved in the administration of the agencies, services, programmes and policies of the public sector; i.e. public servants that manage the entirety of public service. In the second sense, the concept refers to the organisation, agencies, structure, departments and units which are charged with and involved in public or governmental task, activities and functions. “These include the civil service, commissions, boards, directorates, parastatals, etc” (Vambe, 2008).

This position somewhat equates the term public service with institutions such as the civil service, directorate, boards and so on; a situation which does not hold much water. The point here is that, the terms civil service and public service are not strictly speaking one and the same. Civil service is narrow in meaning and scope, while public service is wider. Okereke (2003), shares this opinion as he argues that, civil service is used to refer to service within government ministries and departments charged with the responsibilities of implementing policies. Similarly, Ujo (2004) opines that the civil service is restricted to civilian functions. But because government functions also involves non-civilian elements; agencies, parastatals and Para- military organizations are created. Thus, the term public service is broader and more inclusive. It is civil service plus other governmental

organizations. Ekwealor (2007) corroborates this position as he asserts that, “public service means the totality of services that are organised under government authority.”

Yayale (2005) offers a detailed analysis of the component of public service. According to him, the public service comprised of:

The civil service – the career personnel of the presidency, the ministries, the extra-ministerial departments, and the services of the national assembly and the judiciary;

The armed forces;

The police and other security agencies;

The parastatals – including social services/infrastructure agencies, regulatory agencies, educational institutions, research institutes, etc (Yayale, 2005).

Akinwale (2007:48), argued that “the connotation between the two concepts of public service and civil service is that the two groups are highly involved in the exercise of policy formulation and policy execution”. The task of government to provide valuable social, economic and public services, is therefore accomplished by the distinct roles played by both public officers and civil servants. Hence, the public service is an indispensable institution in every political system. The indispensability of the public service stemmed from the fact that, it is the administrative machinery of government not only for the formulation of public policy, but also for their implementation. The functions of the public service are so complex that the government would be handicapped in the absence of the public service. While acknowledging the importance of the public service, Economic Commission for Africa notes that:

The public service (ministries, parastatals and extra-ministerial departments) has always been the tool available to African governments for the implementation of developmental goals and objectives. It is seen as a pivot for growth of African economies. It is responsible for the creation of an appropriate and conducive environment in which all sectors of the economy can perform optimally, and it is the catalyst role of the public service that propelled government all over the world to search continuously for better ways to deliver their services (ECA, 2004:8).

The significance of the public service in governance is not limited to Africa continent, or developing countries. Indeed, public service plays tremendous role even in the advanced countries, as it is responsible for the regulation and effective monitoring of the activities of the private sectors who are the key actors in the economy of such countries. Balogun and Anyebe (2000:61), corroborates this position as they noted that, “...the civil service plays an important role in the administration of a modern system of government in all political systems whether in western or non-western states, in countries in the communist blocs and in developed or developing states”. However, the public service has greater role to play in Nigeria, and other developing countries. This is because, in addition to the responsibilities of maintaining law and order; government in these countries have to formulate and implement developmental policies and programmes.

Lawson (1985) opines that “a civil service which is equipped only for the maintenance of law and order will be completely irrelevant to present day needs”. Organised states have always had civil servants and the role of these servants can be studied at two levels. First, it is the primary function of the civil servant to advise his political master on all aspects of government activities to ensure formulation of the policy that is congruent with the objectives of the government of the day. Secondly, once a policy has been made, a civil servant must loyally carryout the policy chosen. It is the task of the civil servants to define and execute post-legislative policy, particularly where such policy involves the substance of the programme or possible legislative revision, or indeed where it involves the machinery for the enforcement of such legislation (Mohammed, 2008).

The foregoing shows that, the public service discharges government rules and regulations and remains an important machinery for operation of the work of government. Furthermore, the establishment of National Poverty Eradication programme as the agency saddled with the responsibility of coordinating all poverty reduction programmes of the federal government is a reflection of government belief in a coordinated approach to the eradication of poverty. This approach is in sharp contrast with the assumption that by its mere presence, and through the discharge of its traditional responsibilities, the public service would work towards the eradication of poverty among the populace.

3.2 Poverty/Poverty Eradication

Poverty is a difficult question from both theoretical and methodological point of view. In other words, the concept of poverty remains controversial both conceptually and in practical measurement. In spite of this, it is a fact in all

human societies albeit with varying degree of intensity. Conceptually, scholars have defined poverty differently, Egwuatu (2002:69), viewed it broadly as the inability of people to meet economic, social and other standards of well being. It includes different dimensions of deprivations, such as economic opportunity, education, health, motivation, lack of empowerment and security. Ajakaiye (2002), conceptualized poverty in four ways, namely;

- (i) Lack of access to basic needs/goods;
- (ii) A result of lack of or impaired access to productive resources;
- (iii) Outcome of inefficient use of common resources, and
- (iv) Result of exclusive mechanism (Ajakaiye, 2002).

The first conceptualisation is essentially economic or consumption oriented. It sees the poor as those individuals or households in a particular society incapable of purchasing a specified basket of basic goods and services such as nutrition, shelter/housing, water, and healthcare. The second conception viewed poverty as a result of, lack of or impaired access to productive resources including education, working skills/tools, political and civil rights to participate in decisions concerning socio-economic conditions. In the third sense, it is seen as the outcome of inefficient use of common resources which may result from weak policy environment, inadequate infrastructure, weak access to technology, credit, etc. The fourth definition associates poverty with the result of certain groups using certain mechanisms in the system to exclude problem group from participating in economic development, including the democratic process.

As beautiful as these conceptualisations are, it is only the first conceptualisation that gives some definition of poverty. The remaining three definitions are more or less focused on the cause of poverty. Again, the third and fourth conceptualisation can be seen as same since the inefficient utilisation of common resources presuppose either wastages of the resources, or denying some segment of the population access to common or societal resources. According to Abubakar (2002), poverty is complex and multi-dimensional. Very often, income/consumption and material based indicators constitute attractive reference points for defining poverty. The nature of poverty, however cannot be captured by a single income based or consumption based indicator, not even by the broadest material proxy measurement of income poverty. He defines poverty based on the utilitarian approach of income/consumption and material index as the totality or state of being wherein individuals, households or communities are unable to afford or fulfil the basic necessities of life: food, clothing and shelter and other economic and social obligations.

Borgatta and Montgomery (2000), alluded to the complex nature of poverty, which they claim is associated with the origin of the word – pauvre, meaning poor. According to them, poverty is simply the state of lacking material possessions, of having little or no means to support oneself. All would agree that anyone lacking the means necessary to remain alive is in poverty, but beyond that, there is little agreement. Some scholars and policy makers would draw the poverty line at the bare subsistence level, while others agree for poverty definitions that include persons whose level of living is above subsistence but who have inadequate means.

This contestation has given rise to the categorisation of absolute and relative poverty (Borgatta and Montgomery, 2000; Spicker et al, 2006; Milborne, 2004). The Copenhagen Declaration of the World Summit for Social Development defines absolute poverty as:

a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to social services (1995).

Absolute poverty set a poverty line at a certain income amount or consumption amount per year, based on the estimated value of a basket of goods (food, shelter, water, etc) necessary for proper living. On the basis of this, the World Bank set an income of \$2 or less a day and \$1 a day or less for poverty, and extreme poverty respectively. Absolute poverty suggests living below a certain minimum standard in relation to the quality of life. Relative poverty on the other hand, indicates that people are poor in relation to other people. Townsend (1979 cited in Milbourne, 2004), offers a broad and clear definition of relative poverty as:

Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged as approved in the societies to which they belong.

The significance of relative poverty is not limited to the fact that it is a more objective approach of looking at poverty. It also provide insight into the fact that an individual or family may earn or spend more than \$2 a day, but

still see him/itself as being poor especially if he is unable to meet up with the societal standards. Hence, both absolute and relative perception of poverty are complementary in the sense that while absolute poverty deals with lack of basic needs of existence; relative poverty considers what in a given society constitute the basic requirements for an acceptable living condition. In addition to this, Ajakaiye (2002) identified other types of poverty as structural or transient poverty. Structural poverty is defined as persistent or permanent socio-economic deprivations. Structural poverty is linked to a host of factors such as limited productive resources, lack of skills for gainful employment, endemic socio-political and cultural factors and gender. Transient poverty, in contrast, is transitory or temporary. It is associated with natural and artificial disasters. “Transient poverty is more reversible, but can become structural if it persist” (Ajakaiye, 2002).

Poverty eradication, therefore, is an attempt to deal with the menace of poverty among a vulnerable community of people. It is a process by which deliberate action(s) are taken in order to ensure that people who are unable to meet up with the basic necessities of life are supported and assisted to achieve same. However, opinions are divided among scholars on the possibility of eradication of poverty. While the protagonists argue that with equitable distribution of resources, poverty can be eradicated in human society, the antagonists insist that poverty is a steady social problem in every human society and cannot be eradicated. Rather, they are of the position that it can only be minimised by a way of reducing its impacts and the percentage of the population affected. With regards to Nigeria, Ajakaiye (2002:9) argues that “the target of the current poverty eradication programme is to eradicate core poverty in Nigeria”. The core poor household is one whose real per capita consumption expenditure is equivalent to one-third of the mean real per capita expenditure.

4. Theoretical Framework

Public service has tremendous influence in the governance of modern state, and particularly on the success or otherwise of government policies and programmes. The public choice theory clearly illustrates how influential top government officials are both in the choice of a particular policy, and in its implementation. Theorists associated with public choice approach include Buchanan (1988), Tullock (1965), and Downs (1967). The subject matter of public choice theory are the theory of the State, voting rules, party politics and the bureaucracy; while its unit of analysis includes the organization, client relations, and the distribution of goods (Sapru, 2007).

“The central tenet of the public choice approach is that all human behaviour is dominated by self-interest” (Olaopa, 2009). It studies the behaviour of politicians and government officials as mostly self interested agents, and their interactions in the social system either as such or under alternative constitutional rules. More specifically the theory explains how political decision making results in outcomes that conflict with the preferences of the general public. In the words of Niskanen (1987),

While the public servants are supposed to work in the public interest, putting into practise the policies of government as efficiently and effectively as possible, public choice theorists see bureaucrats as self interested utility maximizers, motivated by such factors as salary, prerequisites of the office, public reputation, power, patronage and the ease of managing the bureau.

Furthermore, the theory rejects any such traditional idea of policy as the search for the public welfare. Rather, the theorists maintain that like private entrepreneurs, politicians in their supply of public policy are guided by private concerns to the same extent as the private profit maximizers. In the same manner, those who work in bureaucracies seek to maximize their budget and the size of the bureau. It is only by increasing the budget that they can maximize their self interests. Although, the public choice theory has been criticised especially for lack of empirical test and support, the theory nevertheless is useful in aiding our understanding of the continuous failure of government policies generally and those of anti poverty in particular.

In this sense, our unit of analysis include the secretariat of National Poverty Eradication programme (NAPEP), the relationship between the agency and members of the public, and the pattern of distributing its benefits among the poor. To begin with, the programmes of poverty eradication must be seen as a search not for public welfare but as means by which top government officials sought to maximize their interests of self aggrandizement. The relationship between NAPEP and the poor population is not different from that of the public service in general. The relationship between the Nigerian public service and the citizenry is that of limited interaction with members of the public. By limited interaction, we mean that members of the public, and indeed the poor population are not given opportunity to participate in the decision making process with regards to how they could be assisted. At best, beneficiaries were handpicked for one scheme or the other. Again, it is important to emphasise the fact that the pattern of distribution of its benefits is selective, and cosmetics. The organization is selective in its choice of beneficiary by selecting only a fragment of the poor population across the country. Also, the approach is cosmetics

to the extent that the financial resources provided for the participants is so meagre such that it cannot bring about significant change in their living conditions.

5. Roles and Achievements of National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)

5.1 Roles of NAPEP

The National Poverty Eradication Programme was established by the Obasanjo administration in the year 2001. It was established as a replacement of its precursor National Poverty Alleviation Programme earlier established by the same administration in 1999. NAPEP was to serve as the coordinating agency of all poverty alleviation agencies put in place by past governments, especially at the federal level. According to Agboola (2011:2), NAPEP's mandate includes:

Monitor and coordinate all poverty eradication efforts/activities in the country;

Spur and ensure mass participation in the economic development process;

Implement and coordinate social safety nets in Nigeria;

Sensitise and catalytically empower the poor to have a voice, and therefore a way of expressing their ideas.

In line with its mandate to intervene in the critical areas of the need of the poor, NAPEP initiated some projects, programmes and schemes which are targeted at the core poor that needs to be encouraged to participate in the economic development process. These programmes include:

The Mandatory Attachment Programme (MAP – 2001).

The Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP – 2001).

Capacity Acquisition Programme 2004.

The Multi Partner-Matching Fund Scheme (MP-MFS).

The Promise Keeper Programme (PKP).

Revolving Microfinance Programme Scheme.

The social safety nets interventions scheme, especially the conditional cash transfer programme (CCT)

The Keke NAPEP project (I & II).

The Farmers Empowerment Scheme (FEP I & II).

The Community Economic Sensitisation Scheme (COMESS).

The Village Solution Scheme (Agboola, 2011).

NAPEP is a federal government intervention agency with branches across the 36 states and 774 local governments of the federation. While its career officers are employees of the federal government, rooms were created for political appointees as state coordinators. The activities of NAPEP are funded from budgetary allocation from the Federal Government, partnership with State Governments and non-governmental Organizations, and Donor agencies.

5.2 Achievements of NAPEP

In the last one decade of its existence, NAPEP with the aid of its various programmes and projects has no doubt made efforts aimed at eradication of extreme poverty in Nigeria. These efforts have brought about certain achievements for the organisation. The table below shows the achievements of NAPEP in terms of the number of people and the amount of money expended in each of its programmes. Please see Table 1 below.

6. Discussions

The foregoing shows that NAPEP as an anti-poverty agency of the government has no doubt pursued the realisation of its goals. However, its achievements are not in any way close to eradication of poverty which is the central mandate of the agency. This is evidenced both in terms of figures and fact; and practical realities in our society. Figures presented in the earlier part of this paper show the endemic nature of poverty in Nigeria. The implication of those facts is that, at best poverty situation in Nigeria fluctuates between 50% and 64% of the population. Practically, poverty is being felt and seen on daily basis. The rate of unemployment in the country is quite unprecedented among graduates and school leavers. In the rural areas, and several slums created around the so called urban centres poverty is very obvious among Nigerians. The living conditions in these areas due largely to lack of access to basic necessities of life is quite dehumanising.

What this suggests is that, the achievements of NAPEP in the number of people captured and intensity of assistance is insignificant to make for any possible eradication of extreme poverty in Nigeria. The total number of persons covered by its various programmes is less than 5 million in a country of over 150 million populations. Again, it is important to stress that not all the beneficiaries from the NAPEP programme are people who are actually poor. Indeed, there are several cases of already employed people but with influence in government who benefited from NAPEP activities while the poor are denied access to the scheme. This shows that while NAPEP schemes are laudable, its method of selecting beneficiary is defective.

The pattern of operation of the agency is a source of delay which hampers its effectiveness. While some of its programmes are funded directly by federal government, some are funded based on partnership with state governments, and non-governmental organisations. Example of programmes included in federal government funding are MAP, CAP, COPE (I) while programmes such as MP-MF; KPK was based on partnership funding by state government, and non-governmental agencies which include faith based organisations. The problem associated with funding programmes with state government, and non-governmental organisations is that until consensus is reached on who should benefit from such fund, NAPEP cannot unilaterally disburse such money. Another problem related to this is that, it takes longer time for consensus to be reached on how to utilise the available fund. Without attempting to dismiss the wisdom in engaging non-governmental organisations, it is better not to involve their finance if NAPEP is to make appreciable impacts on poverty eradication. They can be engaged as facilitators of the schemes. The responses from state government towards poverty eradication programmes varies significantly, and thus waiting for individual state government to provide finance may bring serious setbacks for the activities of the organisation in a particular state.

Furthermore, the level of funding provided for the various activities of the organisation is quite small compare to the enormity of task of the agency. This is important because most of its programmes which appears to be useful in the fight against poverty ends up selecting a few beneficiary. Another pertinent issue is the question bothering on the potency of NAPEP schemes in the eradication of poverty. The argument here is that, poverty in Nigeria is a serious social problem, and must be fought firmly and seriously too. Fighting poverty seriously require proper diagnosis in order to determine what proportion of poor Nigerians belong to structural poverty class, and what percentage are in the transient category. This would enable the agency devise schemes appropriate for each category of the poor people in the country.

Table 1. NAPEP programmes and number of beneficiaries since its inception in 2001

S/N	Programmes	No. of Participants	Amount Expended (₦)
1	MAP	32,031	2,860,240,000.00
2	CAP	138,085	NA
3	Keke NAPEP (Phase I, II & III)	5,000	-
4	COPE	62,846	1,063,000,000.00
5	COPE (Phase II)	92,295	2,265,000,000.00
6	Farmers Empowerment Scheme	600	18,000,000.00
7	MP-MF	-	6,614,000.63
8	KPK	-	371,000,000.06k
9	Revolving Micro-Finance Scheme	-	869,047,000.00
	Total	3,030,857	

Source: Agboola, S. O. (2011), Briefs on NAPEP's Mandate, Achievements, and Constraints since Inception

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

Governance since the emergence of modern state has assumed a very tasking dimension, such that the responsibility of the state has witnessed unprecedented expansion. Therefore, the institution of the public service occupies an indispensable position in assisting the political leadership in not only decisions making, but in seeing to the effective and efficient implementation of such decisions. In Nigeria, poverty constitutes one major social

problem confronting about 65% of the population. For these segments of the population, dehumanising living conditions occasioned by lack of food, shelter, sanitation among others remains their lots. This is the situation in Nigeria despite the existence of several anti poverty policies of successive Governments. This calls to question the efficacy of such policies or the agencies saddled with the responsibility of their implementation, and/or both. Governments have over the years devised different policy measures aimed at reducing the scourge but without tangible results. In order to avoid the shortcomings of the previous anti poverty policies and more importantly have one agency to coordinate all poverty reduction programmes of the Government, NAPEP was established in 2001.

In the last one decade of its existence, NAPEP has not fared better than any of its predecessors significantly. This paper, thus maintains that the behaviour and attitude of public officers both in the decision making process and implementation remains a major challenge to effective public service delivery. Also, there are a number of administrative issues in the running of NAPEP which hinders its optimal performance. These issues range from inadequate offices and facilities across the federation; shortage of skilled manpower; and absence of appropriate autonomy among others.

7.2 Recommendations

In order to strengthen the institution of NAPEP towards more effectiveness and efficiency in the fight against poverty in Nigeria, the following recommendations are offered.

There is need to review the institutional framework within which NAPEP is being implemented. This review should be undertaken with a view to addressing key issues such as the status of the agency, the ownership of the agency, its programmes and funding of such programmes. As it is presently constituted, NAPEP depends on partnership with states, local governments, and nongovernmental organisations to fund more than half of its schemes. This largely compromised its independence and objectivity in the selection of beneficiary for its schemes.

In order for NAPEP to make appreciable impacts in the reduction of poverty in Nigeria, the agency must have adequate information not only of how many families or Households are poor, but also of the nature of their poverty (i.e. how many households are structurally or transiently poor). This information would help NAPEP in fashioning appropriate schemes for the eradication of poverty.

There is the need for the federal government whose idea is NAPEP to realise that poverty is a serious problem in the country, and it is not selective. Therefore, for any antipoverty programme to succeed, such programmes must not be selective either on the basis of geographical consideration, or political affiliation of beneficiary.

In relation to the above, government at all levels, and especially at the federal level must increase monetary commitment in terms of budgetary allocation to NAPEP, and all its poverty eradication programmes.

NAPEP presence at the local government level is to say the least not adequate to make for substantial improvement in the fight against poverty. For now, it is mere symbolic that the chairman of the Local Government Council is a member of the Local Government Monitoring Committee. There is need for career officers at the local government level to undertake the implementation of its programmes. This must be supported with appropriate facilities such as office accommodation, and other working tools.

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