

## **Sustainability of Rural Socio-Economic Development Programmes and Poverty Reduction in Nigeria: a Study of Ebonyi State Community and Social Development Agency (EB-CSDA) in Izzi Clan.**

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### **Abstract**

The dynamic, complex and multi-dimensional nature of poverty makes it one of the most current problems that are negatively affecting the globe. This study investigated the high level socio-economic poverty ravaging Izzi clan of Ebonyi State Nigeria. Specifically, the study sort to find out why there is high incidence of poverty in Izzi despite government and individual efforts over the years. The study adopted the Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT) by Prahat Ranjan Sarkar in 1959, and the Socio-Political and Economic Theory as propounded by Adam Smith in 1776 as its frameworks of analysis. Some randomly selected Izzi people, particularly from the villages were interviewed to elicit relevant information and data for the study. We discovered that over reliance on persistent farming, lack of helping hands from the haves, lack of family planning and non-exposure to early formal education, were among the major causes of unending poverty among Izzi people. The study therefore recommended for the enabling legislation to check the ever-increasing population without a corresponding means of livelihood, aggressive rural electrification and provision of portable water, provision of micro-credit loan scheme to the rural poor and proper sensitization of the rural communities on the activities EB-CSDA. The implication is that if proactive measures are not taken urgently by the government and the people, many bread winners in Izzi clan are likely to commit suicide.

**Keywords:** Sustainable development; rural socio-economic development programmes; poverty reduction.

### **Introduction**

Over the years, particularly at the inception of the fourth republic in 1999, many Nigerians were told that poverty alleviation shall be the hallmark of government. Actually, the government embarked on poverty reduction programmes such as: Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Ebonyi State Community and Poverty Reduction Agency (EBCPRA) and later, Ebonyi Community and Social Development Agency (EB-CSDA), to mention but a few.

The government in realizing the serial nature of poverty on the land conceptualized and implemented the foregoing and other various targeted poverty reduction measures as palliatives and in most cases, in conflict with some development partners such as: UNDP, World Bank, USAID, and DFID, in an effort to analyze and proffer solutions to the menace. What puzzles one is that over the years that these various attempts were made or implemented by different governments in the country, the level of poverty is still very high that Nigeria is still described by World Bank (2014), as one of the twenty (20) most impoverished nations in the world. Ebonyi state is not different as the state is rated the third poorest state in Nigeria's 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), with the worst hit being Izzi clan.

While it cannot be denied that Nigeria, over the years, has made varied attempts to stem the tide of poverty and has been described according to World Bank through the Nigeria Economic Report released in July 2014, as having one of the world's highest economic growth rate averaging 7.4%, wide-spread poverty has continued to rear

its ugly head. Unfortunately too, the alarming rate of poverty in Ebonyi state and among Izzipeople in particular today, has become a major problem eating deep into the fabric of the state and an ill wind that blows no one any good. Poverty in Izzi clan today, is a phenomenon that is better described than defined because of its amoebic nature.

In the words of Agboti (2005:83), “poverty is an economic state of being and not as a result of any character deficiency. Being poor means lacking a means of subsistence that will be capable of providing what could be considered as a secure and good standard of living. Agbor (2006) argued that most of the forces that cause poverty are social since according to him, they reflect the system of resources allocation that are made by societies and as such, can be reserved.

Before the outbreak of the Nigerian civil war in late 1960’s, Abakaliki (Izzi) yams, cassavas, coco yams and rice were so abundant that they were exported outside the shores of Igbo land. In fact, the yam bans served as tourist centres, an evidence of doggedness and craftsmanship of the people. Unarguably and regrettably, Izzi people in Ebonyi state who are homogenous and well integrated socially, culturally and economically, have suffered the worst social degradation as a result of the alarming poverty in the area. This brings to fore, a lot of contradictions as to why the people who were hitherto described as “the food basket of the eastern and southern Nigeria” as a result of their being the leading producers of rice, yam, cassava and other arable crops, can be as poor as not to afford their three square meals daily.

Although evidences have shown that there is no nation or community that is absolutely free from poverty, the main difference is probably, the intensity and prevalence of this malaise. In line with that, the central bank of Nigeria (1999:9) views poverty as:

A state where an individual or community is not able to cater adequately for his/its basic needs of food, clothing and shelter; is unable to meet social and economic obligations; lacks gainful employment, skills; assets and self esteem and has limited access to social and economic infrastructure such as education, health, portable water and sanitation; and consequently has limited chance of advancing his/her/its welfare to the limits of his/her/its capabilities.

Available evidences, statistics and indeed, the trend of events have shown that Nigeria, as a nation, and its component states especially, Ebonyi, is seriously caught in the web of abject poverty.

A close look at the level of socio-economic and physical infrastructural development in Ebonyi state today shows that, the worst hit in terms of high-level poverty is Izzi people apparently due to their social, political and academic backgrounds which are equivalent to that of deprivation and degradation. For instance, it is a common sight to see women and young people between the ages of 18 and 47 years (mostly Izzi indigenes) with their hoes, cutlasses, shovels and tubs waiting along some major roads and streets within Abakaliki urban centre including, Spera-in-Deo Junction Along Abakaliki-Ogoja Express Road, Kpiri-Kpiri Opposite Abakaliki Township Stadium, Ogoja Road by Vanco junction, Water Works Road Opposite Mr. Bigg’s, Rice Mile by Onuebonyi junction to mention but a few, line up in their numbers patiently waiting for their unsuspecting customers to hire them to make ends meet. They collect as little as N500 and N1000 as daily pay for their services such as farm/compound clearing, bricklaying, digging or even construction works, with some attendant horror experiences and intimidation by their hirers. Most of these jobbers have families of eight (8) or more with other vulnerable dependent relatives to cater for.

According to one of these job seekers at the opposite Abakaliki township stadium, Mr. Nwankwegu Mbam Nwibo, “we are suffering in the village and that is why I told my family of 7 to wait for me so that I will see if I can get money to feed them but right now, I am owing this madam (food seller) N610 for my own food which I bought from her for 7days now, and I have not seen any job”.

However, suffice it to say that successive governments in Nigeria have tried to address the issue of poverty through the enunciation of various poverty reduction or alleviation programmes with less than proportionate results. Feelers have pointed out that, the reasons for these abysmal performances are not farfetched as most of the programmes were not community driven and as such have no bearing on the lives of the rural dwellers, funds meant for such programmes were usually hijacked upon release by greedy and wealthy individuals, most of the completed projects are greeted with lack of maintenance culture but the worst is the non-sustainability of such programmes (Nwankwo, 2011).

It is important to note in the words of Hodges (2001), that since early 1970s, different rural developments and poverty reduction/eradication programmes have been implemented in Nigeria including Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure, DFRRRI (1972), Operation Feed the Nation, OFN (1976), Green Revolution Programme (1980), National Directorate for Employment NDE (1986), Better Life for Rural Women, BLFRW (1992), and so on. Nevertheless, available statistics in the subject of poverty and poverty reduction agencies in Nigeria indicate that considerable gap existed between the target objective of alleviating, eradicating or reducing poverty and the actual achievements of the various institutions. The performances of the past poverty reduction institutions seem to suggest that the efforts of various governments in the past to reduce poverty in the country were grossly inadequate or lacked focus. At present, the poor people’s perception of formal poverty reduction institutions is largely that of ineffectiveness and irrelevance to their lives as they contributed little or nothing in their strategies to survive and rarely help them to escape poverty, this is despite the huge sum of naira sunk into these programmes.

Having subscribed to the United Nations inspired Millennium Development Goals, one of whose objectives is eradicating poverty by 2015, Nigeria in 2001 embraced the process of outlining its own Poverty Reduction Strategy Process (PRSP). One of these strategies is the United Nations sponsored Community and Social Development Programme. The programme was in two phases, the phase one of the programme covered such states as Abia, Cross River, Ekiti, Kebbi, Kogi, Yobe. On the other hand, the phase two of the programme covered such states as; Ebonyi, Edo, Gombe, Kwara, Osun and Zamfara. In each of these states where the programme took place, an agency known and addressed as the State’s Community and Social development Agency was usually established to carry out the underlying task of poverty reduction.

In Ebonyi state, such agency was established in 2008. It is known and addressed as the Ebonyi State Community and Social Development Agency (EB-CSDA). Upon arrival, EB-CSDA was welcomed with a big sigh of relief to the poverty stricken people of Ebonyi State. The sustainability of this programme, especially in Izzi clan (Abakaliki, Ebonyi and Izzi local government areas) is a source of worry.

It should be noted that sustainability of development programme is the ability to ensure that development that has been achieved in the community is not abandoned. Essentially, most people in this country believe that it is the

responsibility of government to provide, maintain and sustain all infrastructures. This research is an attempt to ascertain the extent to which sustainability of community development programme by EB-CSDA has and can reduce poverty in Izzi clan.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The persistent increase in the number of matured adults without meaningful means of livelihood but with an astronomical number of dependent relatives coupled with always defective structures in Izzi clan despite government and individual efforts over the years is the major problem of this research.

Rural socio-economic underdevelopment and poverty escalation in Izzi clan of Ebonyi state have been part of the problems that affect the social and economic lives of the people. From 1970s till date, various rural development and poverty reduction programmes which differed in nomenclature and perhaps, organizational structures, have been introduced and implemented nationwide, but with minimal or no visible results in Izzi as most of those programmes have been seen to end up with the regimes that introduced them. For examples, one of the National Special Programme for Food Security (NSPFS) in EbiaUnuhu (Abakaliki L.G.A) was abandoned till date. In another development, the fertilizer plant at Onuebonyi (Izzi L.G.A) is already moribund to mention but a few.

Available evidences have shown that poverty generally has become one of the Izzi's deadliest diseases. It is a pervasive phenomenon characterized by low levels of income and social deprivations. These more often than not, have continuously made it difficult for people of the area to freely socialize or associate with people outside their area. They prefer to be alone than being insulted or seen to be insulted by other people as a result of their perceived mismatch with other people in the society (comity of clans in Nigeria).

The Federal Office of Statistics has reported that the poverty level in Ebonyi state has risen from 52.6% in 1996 to 59.75% in 2014. According to the report, the indication for social sector development is unfavourable for Ebonyi state in general and worse for the poor in the state, (FOS, 2014).

Poverty manifests in worsening degrees and severity in Izzi despite the vast natural resources and economic potentials the area are endowed with, (EB-CSDA project manual, 2010). A direct effect of poverty in Izzi clan is seen in the virtual collapse of basic infrastructure and lack of or near absence of basic social amenities such as electricity, portable water, good roads, health services delivery, educational institutions, to mention but a few.

Specifically, observation reveals that the development policies formulated by past regimes since the creation of the state in 1996 have not completely elicited the desired impact on the people with regards to poverty reduction. Thus, such policies did little to foster a strong sense of integration and commitment to overcome the numerous and multi-faceted poverty problems of the state, (EB-CSDA, 2009). **More so**, it is a truism that past poverty reduction programmes adopted non-participatory approach during project planning, formulation and implementation. **More so**, they were neither demand-driven nor well-targeted, seriously lacked origination from the people, and were often, not sustained.

Perhaps, it is against this background that Ebonyi state was selected by the Federal Ministry of Finance and the National Planning Commission as one of the six pilot states in Nigeria for the phase II UNDP-sponsored Community and Social Development Project (CSDP), thus, the existence of the Ebonyi State Community and Social

Development Agency (EB-CSDA) as the body in charge of the reduction of poverty in the state. The extent to which this agency has sustained its rural poverty reduction programmes and projects in Izzi clan to deliver the people from the almost intractable quagmire of socio-economic poverty is a source of worry and concern by the people. In view of the fore-going, the following research question guided the study:

- Why has poverty persisted in Izzi clan in spite of huge budgetary proposal for poverty reduction and economic funds injected into EB-CSDA?

### **Objectives of the Study**

The broad objective of the study was to find out how poverty reduction in Izzi clan can be achieved through sustainability of EB-CSDA's development programmes. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Find out why poverty has persisted in Izzi clan despite the individual efforts and huge funds that are being injected into EB-CSDA.
- Ascertain why it has been difficult for most Izzi people to freely mix with other people in the society.

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **Sustainability of Community Development Programmes**

Sustainability of community development involves maintaining development over time (Ezima,2009). This therefore, means the ability to ensure that development projects that have been achieved in the community are not abandoned. At the same time, the growth and development of the community at the present and future are assured.

Turner (2008) viewed sustainable development as an optional sustainable growth policy to maintain an acceptable rate of growth in per capita real incomes without depleting the national capital asset stock on the natural environment assets stock. World Commission on Environment and Development in Odutuyi (2013) described sustainable development as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. What this means is that the needs of the present generation of people should be satisfied and the process of development should be continuous to the extent that the future generations will build on the success attained to meet their own needs. The approach embodies the notion and ideal of a development process that is equitable and socially responsive recognizing the extensive nature of poverty, deprivation and inequality between and within nations, classes and communities.

Sustainability of development programmes in Izzi clan is a sure-bet for poverty reduction as the consequences of non-sustainability or abandoning development projects are better thought than imagined. In line with that, Akande (1998) noted that many programmes that communities, governments or non-governmental organizations initiated have been abandoned or allowed to waste because no efforts have been put in place to sustain the projects. This according to him, results in colossal waste of fund that had been expended on such projects.

A programme or project can be said to be sustained if the prospects is reaped for quite a long time and that was why, Hanachor (2004), observed that the degree of sustainability of a project has been defined as "the percentage of project initiated, goods and services that are still delivered and maintained five years past the termination of donor resources, the continuation of local stimulation by the project, and the generation of successive service and initiative as a result of project built local capacity.

## **Poverty**

Conceptualizing poverty is as difficult as determining its effects. As literature is replete with the definitions of poverty, many scholars for instance, Abumere (2004) believes that, this is as a result of many researchers in the field. He further stressed that poverty as a multi-component phenomenon cannot be defined or measured by one single variable like income insisting that it must be defined in terms of many other variables such as consumption, socio-economic resources, access to social and political infrastructure and demographic variables (life expectancy and infant mortality, political participation, freedom and human rights).

For Ajadi (2010), the poverty situation in the rural sector of the Nigerian economy is a response to the process of development brought about by institutions to undertake specific rural development activities and so, state decisions about rural development in whatever guise in Nigeria, are made within the context of those institutions. To some people, being poor cannot be taken to mean being weak or not hardworking. In that line, Neubeck in Agboti (2005), defined poverty as an economic state of being and not as a result of any character deficiency.

For us, since poverty is a relative term, we see it as a state of humiliation, degradation, the sense of being dependent and of being forced to accept rudeness, insults, and indifference when one seeks help. This is a common experience in Izzi clan of Ebonyi State. Most times, poverty is defined based on its telling effect on its victim as expressed by one poor man in the words of Narayan (2003:30), “don’t ask me what poverty is because you have met it outside my house. Look at my utensils and the clothes that I am wearing. Look at everything and write what you see. What you see is poverty”.

The above reflect just a description of a few of the various perceptions of poverty at least from the poor person. Poverty could denote a state of deprivation, that is, not having enough to eat, a high rate of infant mortality, a low life expectancy, low educational opportunities, poor water, inadequate health care, unfit housing and lack of active participation in the decision making process. It could also mean in other words, absence of or lack of basic necessities of life or lack of command over basic consumption needs such as food, clothing and/or shelter, glaring defects in the economy of the concerned persons or groups.

In buttressing the difficulties encountered in arriving at a common and generally accepted definition of poverty, Aoyade (1997:5) posits that “there seems to be a general agreement that poverty is a difficult concept to handle, and that it is more easily recognized than defined. Even attempts made to categorize some specific areas at which poverty could be viewed are fraught with lack of agreement”.

It should be noted that the definitions of poverty and its causes vary by gender, age, culture and other social and economic contexts. Lending credence to the divergent views on poverty definition, the World Bank (2000:10) states that; “participatory studies have cumulatively shown, that the poor experience and understand their poverty in terms of a range of non-material and intangible qualities such as insecurity, lack of dignity and status or a lack of power or opportunity”. Summarily, the qualities and characteristics of poverty differ remarkably by social group and by geographical, political and economic contexts.

## **The Nature and Dimension of Socio-Economic Poverty in Izzi Clan of Ebonyi State**

For the purpose of this study, we adopt the definition of poverty as given by World Bank Report (2000) which sees poverty as hunger, lack of/dilapidate shelter, being sick and not being able to go to hospital, not being able to attend good schools, not knowing how to read, not being able to speak properly, not having a job, having fear for the future, losing lives to illness brought about by unclean water, powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom. This means in a nutshell, that poverty entails socio-economic and political deprivation which affects individuals, households and communities and which results in lack of access to the basic necessities of life. Poverty can also be defined as a state of humiliation, degradation, the sense of being dependent and of being forced to accept rudeness, insults, and indifference when people or one seeks help and which makes social integration difficult if not impossible.

Economic performances as well as the standard of living of any given population are usually the general factors used as indicators of poverty. In Izzi area of Ebonyi State, the standard of living and decent live is only a malaria man dream. This is because, the people purchasing power, income or consumption is far from being satisfactory. Available evidences show complete or almost lack of standard education, health care, basic infrastructure and other welfare facilities. These have made the people to live a secluded and lonely life thus, find it difficult to mix with other members of the society. An average Izzi man/woman is a peasant rural farmer with deplorable house, unsafe drinking water and the likes.

## **Summary Review of Some Past and Present Poverty Reduction Activities in Nigeria**

### **National Directorate of Employment (NDE)**

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE), was established by the Federal Military Government under General Ibrahim Babangida in October 19, 1986 with the primary role of promoting skill acquisition, self employment and labour intensive work schemes. It also collected and maintained a data on unemployment and vacancies in the country. It concerned itself with designing of employment programmes such as school leaver apprentice scheme, entrepreneurs training programmes for graduates, labour based work programmes and resettlement of trained beneficiaries. While some of its achievements cannot be doubted, NDE's major objective was defeated by the endemic corruption in the Nigerian society (Anosike, 2001).

### **Peoples Bank of Nigeria (PBN)**

Decree No 22 of 1990 established the PBN, under the regime of General Ibrahim Babangida. It was charged with the responsibility of extending credit to under privileged Nigerians who could not ordinarily access such loans from the orthodox banking system (Orji, 2004). Before it was merged with the Nigeria Agriculture and Cooperative Bank (NACB) to form the Nigeria Agricultural, Cooperative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB), the PBN was engaged in in-group lending to cottage industry promoters, agricultural producers, NGOs and cooperative societies, (Anosike, 2001).

Anosike noted that the bank had a high degree of problem loan as its external audit report showed a huge loss provision of over 80% on its loan portfolio at its close. Some of its funds were also trapped in distressed and liquidated bank due to unwise investment decisions.

### **Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP)**

This programme was established in 1997 by Miriam Abacha, the wife of Late General Sani Abacha to provide credit for agricultural production and processing cottage and small-scale industries through cooperative societies and so on. CBN and World Bank (1999) noted that though FEAP should be appreciated for financing a lot of life changing projects nationwide, it had problems including; the non-supervision and monitoring of the loans projects by the participating banks, fabricators connivance with the beneficiaries to inflate cost of equipment, provision of sub-standard equipment, poor loan recovery and so on. These led to its collapse and its assets were later handed over to the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP).

### **Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI)**

It was established in 1986 to coordinate and streamline all rural development activities in the country and accelerate the pace of integrated rural development. Though now defunct, the directorate left legacies including rural feeder roads, portable water supply and electricity, (Ekot, 2000). However, like other poverty reduction agencies in the country, it was over ambitious in scope and had insignificant national grassroots coverage (Egbe, 2000).

According to him, it was grounded in corruption; poor coordination; lack of technical depth in most projects and lack of active communities/beneficiaries' participation.

### **Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) of 2000**

In the year 2000, PAP was introduced to urgently create a mental based 200,000 jobs, Aliyu (2003). The immediate objective was to mop up from the labour market, in the shortest time, some 200,000 unemployed people in the face of increasingly restive youths (Aliyu, 2003). In the words of Orji (2004), the projects undertaken by the participants of the programmes were to stimulate economic activities and improve the environment. It was also to reduce social vices and stem rural-urban drift. It recorded some appreciable achievements. Few months after its implementation, the public roundly criticized it such that the government had to institute a panel to review it. The panel identified over centralization, unsustainable resins, uncoordinated management, over politicization, irregular payment, lack of monitoring, poor logistics and corruption, as its challenges and recommended for its discontinuation (Amogue, 2003).

### **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**

UNDP has maintained a considerable contribution towards poverty reduction in Nigeria. It largely works through NGOs in efforts towards poverty alleviation. According to the CBN (1999), the UNDP serves as catalyst to midwife sustainable human development. It is also involved in technical development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as part of its poverty alleviation programmes in collaboration with states and local governments and various communities nationwide. The *modus operandi* of UNDP according to World Bank (2002) is to provide a counterpart fund while participating states also do same for any given UNDP project. One of the Poverty Reduction Programmes which UNDP presently undertakes in Nigeria in general and Ebonyi state in particular, is the Community- Based Poverty Reduction Programme.



## **Overview of the Ebonyi State Community and Social Development Agency (EB-CSDA)**

Section 4, Cap 45 laws of Ebonyi State 2009, copiously established for the state, a body known as the Ebonyi State community and social development agency (EB-CSDA). According to the said section, the agency is a body corporate, with perpetual succession and a common seal with power to sue and be sued in its corporate name, and may, in the exercise of its functions acquire, hold and dispose of movable and immovable property.

### **Status and Characteristics of the Agency**

- a. The agency operates a social fund that finances small projects in several social and economic sectors, targeted to benefit the people and vulnerable groups in the state's communities, based on a participatory manner of demand generated by the community and screened against a set of eligible criteria.
- b. It does not itself identify projects but selects from among those proposed by benefiting communities. It does not implement projects but cooperates with other project committee, elected by the benefiting communities, support and facilitate efforts of local communities to ensure provision of expertise in project implementation and management.
- c. Project implementations are being carried out in a decentralized, practical and flexible way. Communities are largely responsible for preparation, implementation and supervision of the projects. The communities do manage the funds disbursed to them.

### **Aims and Objectives of the Agency**

Section 6 paragraphs (a-g) of the (EB-CSDA World Bank assisted and related matters law 2003), outline the aims and objectives of the agency to include among others;

- a. Improve the living conditions of the people in communities and address their demands not satisfied by current society programme in Ebonyi State.
- b. Empower rural communities so that they can play a role in reducing poverty in their communities.
- c. Provide small, labour intensive economic and social infrastructures and amenities to communities in the state.
- d. Help to saturate high poverty communities with a comprehensive array of social services that are capable of mitigating the effects of poverty.

According to the EB-CSDA Operation Manual (2008), the functions of the agency include:

- Support policies and utilize effective strategies for the effective implementation of projects in benefiting communities, directed at poverty reduction in Ebonyi state.
- Disburse funds provided to it by donors in support of poverty reduction to the benefiting communities of the state among others.

**Table 1: Major achievements of EB-CSDA in Abakaliki, Ebonyi and Izzi local government areas between 2008 and 2015**

S/n	Community	LGA	Project	Approved budget inN	Remark
1.	Ezzainyimagu	Izzi	Extension of civic centre	5,250,000	Completed
2	NdeaborAmachi	Abakaliki	Sec. Sch. 6 class room block, principals office	4,750,000	Completed
3	Ishieke	Ebonyi	Civil centre	3,525,750	Completed
4.	Azu Egana	Izzi	Sec. sch. 6 class room block and VIP toilets	4,800,000	Completed
5	Agalegu Ishieke	Ebonyi	Health centre	4,750,070	Completed
6	Ndiebor Ezzainyimagu	Izzi	8 boreholes	5,200,000	Completed
7	Ofrekepeinyimegu	Izzi	6 boreholes one with over head tanks	4,851,400	Completed
8	OkariaAmachi	Abakaliki	Pri. Sch. 6 classroom block & VIP toilets	4,800,000	Completed
9	Okpuitimo Unuhu	Abakaliki	3 boreholes	700,000	Completed
10	Nkaliki	Ebonyi	Skill acquisition centre	4,850,000	Completed
11	St. Patrick's Catholic, Kpirikpiri	Ebonyi	Completion of 16 classroom and VIP toilets	4,800,000	Completed
12	AmachiUnuhu	Abakaliki	Market stalls	4,900,000	Completed
13	Ndiogbu NdiezeInyimegu	Izzi	Rural electrification	3,800,000	Completed
14.	NdiagbuEzzaInyimegu	Izzi	Sec. Sch. 4 classroom block & VIP toilets	4,985,000	Completed
15	Riola Dev. Ass. Ishieke	Ebonyi	Bridge and culvert (4 in no) construction	2,700,000	Completed
16.	Ndiegedelgbeau	Izzi	Construction of bridges	4,100,000	Completed
17.	AgbajaUnuhu	Abakaliki	Civic centre	4,500,000	Completed
18	Ndiegu village, Nkaleke	Ebonyi	3 boreholes	1,950,000	Completed
19	Indigent patient care association, Enyigba	Abakaliki	Boreholes with over head tanks	4,640,000	Completed
20	EzzaInyimegu	Izzi	Health care	4,500,000	completed
21	Ebia – unuhu	Abakaliki	Health centre extension of rural electrification and/transformer	4,250,000	Completed
22	NdiurukuAmagu	Abakaliki	Extension of rural electrification	1,500,000	Completed
	Total			90,102,220	

Source: EB-CSDA Project Report, 2015 pp13-21.

### General Causes of Poverty

People are poor because they lack money and they lack money because they are unable to sell their labour or because they are able to earn only very small income. In agreement to the above, Agboti (2005), identified the structure of a country's economy as one of the major causes of poverty. He went further to say that low salary level, high population, exploitative intermediaries, age and periodic employment, are among the many causes of poverty. Understandably, anyone who is suffering from the foregoing, no doubt, will have the likelihood of malnutrition, inability to procure loans, inability to freely socialize with others, denial of education among others as consequences.

Similarly, the major causes of poverty among Izzi people can be attributed to the following: corruption that makes it difficult for evenly and justifiable distributions of common wealth by the government, inability to discover, develop, manage and control of local resources, insufficient law and order, lack of financial investment knowledge, inability to exhibit brotherly spirit by the haves which makes them not to help the poor among them, lack of access to quality education, discrimination by the government in project allocation, effects of Nigeria-Biafra war in which the Biafra lost, among others.

Alluding to the aforementioned, Harison (1993) and White (2001) identified the historical antecedent of the people as the root cause of poverty. According to them, many of the poorest nations in the world were former colonies, slave exporting areas and territories from which resources had been systematically extracted for the benefit of colonizing countries.

Obadan (1997) sees the causes of poverty to include: Inadequate employment opportunities; inadequate access to markets where the poor can sell their goods and services; low endowment of capital; destruction of natural resources leading to environmental degradation and reduced productivity. Also, Obadan (2001) quoting the Department for International Development (DFID), identified macro-economic mismanagement on the part of successive governments, corruption and misuse of oil windfalls, as the three factors that constitute the bedrock of poverty in Nigeria. Beyond doubt, therefore, the consequences of the foregoing would include; physical and psychological misery for the victims, formation of slums in the cities, worsening ecological problems and political and social discomforts, among others.

Pointing discrimination and social inequality as the major cause of poverty among people, Goldsmith and Blakely (2002), argued that poverty and inequality are two different things, but inequality can feed widespread poverty by barring groups with lower status from accessing the tools and resources to support themselves. Beyond inequality and history, war and political instability, national debt, vulnerability to natural disasters and among others, are both the internal and external causes of poverty, Jennings and Kushnick (1999), Maskovsky (2001), Quigley (2003), Ajadi (2010).

In his summarized but holistic view of the causes of poverty, Bradshaw (2005), outlined: individual deficiencies, cultural belief systems that support – subcultures in poverty, political-economic distortions, geographical disparities and cumulative and circumstantial origins, as the most visible.

It is worthy to note that the causes of poverty as discussed are only expressive, lamentative and complaints and not suggestive as to how poverty in the primitive rural areas like Izzi can be comprehensively tackled.

### **Challenges of Poverty Reduction Programmes in Nigeria and Ebonyi State in Particular**

Ogunleye (2006) observed that, despite the several attempts of governments, donor agencies, NGOs, and other related bodies, the scourge of poverty is still apparent. He enumerated the following as the major challenges to poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria:

- Poverty alleviation policies of successive governments in Nigeria have always remained a mere political slogan or statement. Federal, state and local governments in Nigeria have always introduced one form of

poverty alleviation or another to better the lots of the people, but, no sooner had these policies were formulated and lunched with fun-fare, than they were abandoned. The implementation aspects of the policies have been weak.

- Lack of proper funding on the part of government is also a problem. As good as the poverty alleviation programmes were or would have been, the coordinators turned the exercise to appear like mere policy statements.
- Political instability and lack of confidence in sustainable democracy is yet another threat to improved quality of life in Nigeria. This is why any attempt to create a positive self image of the country as to attract investors, will continue to hit a brick wall.
- Poor infrastructural development which always hinder economic expansion. Good roads, portable water, electricity, and the likes, no doubt, determine the productivity levels of artisans and even the organized private sector, but the level of infrastructural development in the country falls below average.
- Unavailability of a reliable population data as a benchmark for proper planning as the previous attempts of doing so have always ended in shambles.

For Yakubu&Aderunmu (2010), and Aminu&Onimisi (2014), the challenges to poverty reduction programmes revolve round lack of targeting mechanisms for the poor, political and policy instabilities, inadequate coordination of the various programmes of poverty alleviation, severe budgetary, management and governance problems, and over extended scope of activities, example DFRRI.

Obadan (1997) had summarized the problems of any poverty alleviation or reduction programme to include corruption, inadequate fund, ethnicity, inadequate/lack of skilled implementing manpower, visionless leadership or lack of political will. From the positions of the scholars, it is a truism that the factors that challenge every poverty alleviation efforts are many and varied and therefore, the following problems cannot be ignored:

- Neglect of agricultural sector: This is an important reason for the perpetual poverty in Nigeria and Ebonyi state in particular. Before the discovery of oil in the Niger-Delta (Ilobiri) in 1956, agriculture was the mainstay of the nation's economy as more than 95% of the major foreign exchange earnings of the country came from it. It is unfortunate that shortly afterwards particularly during the oil boom of 1970s, the concern from both the government and individuals for agriculture began to dwindle because they saw the "back gold" as the easier means of getting money. Unemployed people prefer going to the cities to staying in the hinterlands for the purposes of agriculture.
- Lack of accountability and transparency on the part of the implementers making the poverty alleviation programmes to serve as conduit pipes for draining the nation's common wealth.
- Inappropriate programme/project designs reflecting lack of involvement of the targeted beneficiaries in the formulation and implementation of the programmes.
- Uncontrolled population growth as a result of lack of effective planning which make parents to give birth to the number of children they cannot comfortably cater for.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study adopted the Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT), propounded by an Indian philosopher, PrabhatRanjan Sarkar in 1959 and Social-Political and Economic theory by Adam Smith (1776) cited in Egbe (2010) as its frameworks of analysis. PROUT which is a collection of socio-economic and political ideas, according to a description by Terry Irving and Rowan Cahill, envisages a decentralized, community-based world economy of self-sufficiency for the poor; economic democracy; small business; and limits on the accumulation of wealth. This theory as a model of socio-economic development, no doubt, attempts to holistically balance the needs for societies to create wealth and grow with the requirements for distribution. PROUT is a socialist theory that recognizes all material goods as common property and seeks the rational and equitable distribution of the property to maximize the physical, social and economic development of the people.

Most of the so called poverty reduction projects or programmes, have always been superimposed by the national or state government to the people of Izzi clan irrespective of their felt needs, and so, PROUT is relevant for this study in that it advocates for participatory, community-based poverty reduction programmes that must be a reflection of the people's felt needs.

Socio-Political and Economic Theory on the other hand, has its origin in the work of Adam Smith's inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations (1776) cited in Egbe (2010). According to Adam Smith and other exponents of this theory, the theory investigates how observed differences in status, esteem, geography and institutions affect the economic, social and political life of a given society or people. The theory draws heavily from economics, political science, law, history and sociology to explain the socio-economic and political behaviour in a given geography, Egbe (2010).

Proper application of this theory can lead to the solution of issues such as unending poverty in Izzi clan, environmental degradation and rural-urban migration. Therefore, this theory becomes very relevant as it revealed that EB-CSDA requires both political will and sound economy to achieve their broad objective. This is because, once poverty dominates a particular people, it creates a cumulative set of problems that requires varieties of strategies to address. The lack of employment for instance, may lead to lack of consumption and spending due to inadequate incomes and to inadequate savings. Such people or group may not meaningfully invest and which can lead to deteriorating self confidence, weak motivation and depression.

## **Methodology**

The study adopted survey design and some randomly selected people considered to be the representative of the people under investigation were used. It should be noted that, Izzi speaking people of Ebonyi state occupies a landmass of over 15,000 square kilometers and it is presently divided into three (3) local government areas of Abakaliki, Ebonyi and Izzi. The people are predominantly agrarian, homogenous and well integrated socially, culturally and economically. Their origin is traceable to Nnodo Ekumenyi with the ancestral home in Amagu in Abakaliki local government area. The 2006 National Population Commission (NPC) census gave the total figure of Izzi area of Ebonyi State as 513, 588 distributed according to the 3 local government areas thus: Abakaliki = 149,683, Ebonyi = 127, 226 and Izzi 236, 679.

Data were primarily gathered through face-to-face interviews by the researchers as the study combined simple random and stratified sampling techniques to ensure that every member of the population has equal and independent chance of being selected among the people interviewed

## **Findings and Discussion**

In the course of our investigation, we discovered the following as thus discussed.

1. Izzi people before now were not used to travelling beyond their territories as to mix with other members of the larger society. This scenario in no small measure contributed to why majority of them do not know that they were poor and they were always satisfied with their rural peasant agrarian life. They were exposed to all kinds of preventable diseases including cholera, guinea worm, malaria etc as a result of the deplorable nature of the type of food they eat, water they drink and the mud-thatched houses which they lived in.
2. Lack of philanthropic and brotherly love among them. The haves among them rarely lend helping hands to the less privileged ones among them. This is why an average Izzi man/woman has an average of 5-7 dependent relatives, most times living in a one room apartment. Most of the children of the less privilege were always intelligent and talented with no one to send them to school or help them pay agreement fee to learn art/handwork. This made a lot of them to be victims of child labour/trafficking.
3. Most of the acclaimed rural development and poverty reduction strategies or activities had or has little or no presence in Izzi areas of Ebonyi State. While it should be noted that Ebonyi State was created in 1996, the truth is that the people were completely neglected by the alumni states of Anambra, Enugu and Abia more than any other place in the state. Presently, less than 20% of the rural communities in Izzi land have access to electricity, decent accommodation, good and portable drinking water, motorable roads, quality education, healthcare and the likes. Even the much praised EB-CSDA's activities presence in the area has an insignificant impact in terms of poverty reduction. A peep into the EB-CSDA's activities in Izzi areas of Ebonyi State between 2008 and 2015 shows an expenditure of less than 100 million in the entire 3 local government areas, this is quite inadequate and unfortunate.
4. One of the major causes of persistent poverty in Izzi land is the overpopulation without a corresponding means of livelihood. An average Izzi woman bears 6-12 children. Both parents may have little or nothing doing and as such, their children are rarely reared beyond the minimum standard. The causes of these are not farfetched. The illiteracy among both parents makes it almost impossible for them to adopt modern child-spacing methods or family planning. In fact, most pregnant women in the area hardly go to hospital or maternity homes during pregnancy. The resultant effects apart from overpopulation have been high rates of maternal mortality and morbidity, high death rates and lack of access to quality life.

The implication of the fore-going is that if the situation (unchecked poverty) continues, most breadwinners will likely commit suicide and the number of orphans and vulnerable children will rise beyond 100%.

## **Conclusion/Recommendations**

The reduction of poverty seems to be the most difficult challenge facing Nigeria as a country, Ebonyi state and Izzi people in particular. This is because the average majority of the population is considered poor. Although a lot of rural development and poverty reduction strategies/programmes/activities which differed in nomenclature and organizational procedure including EB-CSDA have been implemented in Nigeria and Ebonyi State in particular, evidences have shown that the number of those in poverty in Izzi land has continued to be on the increase.

In view of the foregoing, the following recommendations should be treated as a matter of urgent importance and not with kiddies' glove:

1. There should be a House of Assembly Legislation mandating every pregnant woman to be delivered of her baby in a government approved hospital or maternity homes. This will be the best avenue to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity, expose the couples to the modern child spacing and family planning. This will be a sure-bet for the people of Izzi clan to give birth to the number of children they can comfortably cater for bearing in mind the general harsh economic situation in the country.
2. Ebonyi State Government should embark on aggressive rural development through the provisions of electricity, portable drinking water, healthcare facilities, micro credit loan scheme to only the rural poor and the likes. This will surely boost the rural economy particularly of Izzi people by increasing the number of people coming from cities to settle in rural communities and reduce rural-urban migration.
3. The well to do people in Izzi clan should imbibe the spirit of brotherly love by encouraging the intelligent and talented less privileged children to either go to school or learn art work. This they can do by paying their basic school fees and agreement fees as the case may be.
4. Majority of the poverty stricken communities in Izzi clan are not aware of the activities of EB-CSDA, let alone accessing the fund. The management of EB-CSDA should embark on grassroots orientation, workshops and seminars on how the agency's fund can be accessed.
5. Ebonyi State through agricultural and other commercial and community banks should provide a micro-credit loan scheme that should be accessible by the poor in Izzi clan. This can help reduce the high incidences of job waiters at various locations in the capital city. This should be treated with a true national spirit to redeem the city of the poverty image.
6. Izzi people should be encouraged to marry outside their areas. This is the surest way of mixing them with other members of different places and encouraging human and societal integration, the earlier the better.
7. Poverty reduction projects or programmes must adopt a holistic approach including:
  - Productive employment in the rural areas
  - Capacity building/skill development
  - Creation of a viable incentive structures
  - Participatory approach (people-centred)
  - At least, basic education, portable drinking water and adequate sanitation.

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