

APPRAISAL OF SUBSIDY REINVESTMENT AND EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF EDO STATE. NIGERIA

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Abstract.

The paper appraised subsidy reinvestment and empowerment programme on socio-economic development of Edo State in the area of maternal child health, roads mass transit, public works and vocational training, community services, women and youth empowerment. Secondary sources of data were used for the study. The study further identified the challenges of Sur-P. Based on the literature reviewed it was concluded that in spite of the numerous policies and programmes initiated by successive Nigerian government especially SURE-P as high and laudable as it seems, their inability to affect the real target, reflects the gap between policy formulation and implementation, more so, poverty kept soaring high. The following recommendations were made: corruption should be tackled in the areas of misappropriation of fund, tribalism and nepotism, and fund meant for any agency or programme should be judiciously used and the accounts of the agency should be audited from time to time to curb misappropriation of funds, among others.

Key Words: maternal child health; roads mass transit; public works and vocational training; community services; and women and youth empowerment

Introduction

Governments all over the world are playing very important role in the distribution of goods and services for the betterment of its citizens. Nigeria is a country endowed with abundance of human and natural resources. However these resources are not put to good use to the benefits of its citizens which led to increase in unemployment rate and as a result of these, majority of its citizens continue to stumble in poverty. Nigeria, a sub-Saharan African nation, has, in recent times half of its populace living in miserable poverty (Ojo, 2008). Likewise, the Federal Office of Statistics (1996) opined that poverty has been gigantic, pervasive, and overwhelms a large proportion of the Nigerian culture. Abiola and Olaopa (2008) stated that the scourge of destitution in Nigeria is an incontrovertible reality, which results in craving, lack of awareness, hunger, sickness, unemployment, poor access to credit facilities, and bleak future and additionally a general level of human sadness.

Nigeria is engulfed with socio-economic problems which have caused poverty and conflict in the country; the growth of the country is still hampered by consumptive culture, weak institutions and fragile political structures (Charles, 2012). Even basic amenities such as shelter, food, water, good roads, access to quality education are in short supply in some geographical areas of the country, still economic recession is the order of the day as prices continue to go up and standard of living is on the rise, and this has greatly contributed to the social economic problem in Nigeria.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) declaration implies that socio-economic development is the continuous improvement in the well-being and in the standard of living of the people. It is the process of economic and social transformation based on cultural and environmental factors. It is measurable in both economic and social terms; for example, growths in the number of jobs created and increase in life expectancy.

In Nigeria, both the state and local governments largely depend on the federally allocated revenue to meet their socio-economic needs. In an occasion that the Federal Government diverts funds unreasonably to pursue its political agenda, opposition controlled states and local governments are short changed to the extent that they cannot discharge their duties effectively. This development has the ability to harm economic growth and development (Uhunmwangho & Akintoye 2016).

Nigeria economy solely depends and revolves around the oil industry. This dependency on oil is not in the best interest of the country. Assuming the oil dries up, the Nigerian economy will definitely collapse (Okonta & Oronto, 2001). Nigeria is the world's 14th largest producer of crude oil. It possesses the world's 8th largest proven natural gas reserves. The country has 4 refineries with an installed production capacity of 445,000 barrels of fuel per day, adequate to meet its domestic needs with a surplus for export (Khan, 1994). Nigerian oil fields are situated in the Niger Delta area of the country.

The Niger Delta area is viewed as the third, largest wetland in the world, whose flora and fauna have sustained life for generations (Azaiki, 2003). For decades running, its oil wealth has provided the bulk of Nigeria's wealth. In the 1970's, era of oil boom, oil gave Nigeria a significant economic power and diplomatic leverage (Okwudili & Emmanuel, 2014). In spite of having fabulous economic potentials, and a territory blessed with natural resources, Nigeria has not fared so well economically. Although, the country is a large net importer of gasoline and other petroleum products, the youths are the worst hit and unemployment rate is always on the increase. Inflation runs at roughly 10% per annum (Onyeizugbe & Onwuka, 2012). Over the years, it is observed that the socio-economic prospects of the Nigerian citizens has dwindled and youth empowerment is at its lowest ebb, even as the earnings and income generated from oil continues to sky-rocket (Iluyomade, 2011).

The greatest challenge facing the country today is unemployment and our youths are not empowered even to embark on business; youths after graduation roam the streets of Nigeria in search of work of which unemployment has maintained a rising trend over the years (Omafume, 2014). Over 50 percent of the Nigerian youth population is unemployed. A recent survey puts the figure at 54 percent. This figure was reduced by a few people on 15th March 2014, not as a result of job provision, but by the claws of death at the Nigerian Immigration Service recruitment exercise. The number of applicants was not fewer than seven hundred thousand with about four thousand positions. Every year, over 300,000 graduates are churned out from the tertiary institutions nationwide (Osalar, 2012). This number grows yearly and translates into more and more youths wandering the streets of Nigerian cities. There is no doubt that youth's unemployment is a societal problem in any nation, but the Nigerian situation is something else. This most times account for most of the social crimes perpetrated by graduates in Nigerian society today. If the youths are empowered and have something to do, and if Federal Government has been carrying out its social economic responsibilities effectively the level of prostitution, armed robbery, oil bunkering, internet fraud, drug addiction, trafficking, rape, kidnapping and all forms of violence like the militant in the Niger Delta and Boko-Haram in the North East may be reduced to it nearest minimum.

Since the beginning of the Fourth Republic in 1999, different administrations in Nigeria have come up with quite a number of policies and programmes either as interventionist measures through apparent policy somersault or outright innovations meant to address societal needs (Uhunmwuango & Akintoye, 2016). One of such is the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P); set up to utilize the funds accruing to the increased amount paid by consumers for the pump price of petroleum products in the country (SURE-P, 2013). SURE-P was targeted to ensure that the Federal Government's part of the savings from fuel subsidy removal or reduction is applied to critically mitigate the spate of youth unemployment in the country through the re-investment of the subsidy funds. In line with Mr. president's promise to encourage wealth creation and mitigate the spate of youth unemployment in the country through the reinvestment of the petroleum subsidy funds, the Federal Government through its ministry of Labour and Productivity has developed a Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme for the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P). The scheme is aimed at empowering young Nigerians (SURE-P official web-page, 2018). The problem now is how has the programme SURE-P influenced the social economic development in Edo State? Based on the issues highlighted above, the purpose of this study is to assess the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) and social economic development in Edo State.

Concept of Socio-Economic Development

In order to understand the concept of socio-economic development, it is pertinent to define the constituents of the concept. Development is defined as a state in which things are improving. But it is defined in different contexts – social, political, biological, science and technology, language and literature. In the socio economic context, development means the improvement of people's lifestyles through improved education, incomes, skills development and employment (Kapur, 2018).

Social development is a process which results in the transformation of social institutions in a manner which improves the capacity of the society to fulfil its aspirations; economic development is the development of economic wealth of countries or regions for the well-being of their inhabitants (Kapur, 2018). Socio-economic development is defined as the process of social and economic development in a society. It is the relationship between an economic activity and social life. It includes activities involving both economic factors which result in the growth of the economy and societal progress. The impacts of socio-economic development are seen in changes in the physical environment and in ecological changes. Socio-economic impact assessment (SEIA) is a study for assessing, in advance, the social and economic consequences of initiation of any industrial activity to the human population. (Ramanathan & Geetha, 1998).

The need to accelerate socio-economic development is vital in order to address poverty. Poverty eradication may require actions to reduce the suffering of the poor and increase their access to social services. It also requires action to increase the poor's ability to generate an income in order to meet their needs. Dada (2017) defines Socio-economic development as the process of social and economic development in a society. Socio-economic development is measured with indicator, such as GDP, life expectancy, literacy and levels of employment.

The concept of subsidy and the history of SURE-P

The issue of petroleum subsidy is familiar to Nigerians. Over the years, subsidies on petroleum products (diesel, petrol and kerosene) have been subjected to progressive subsidy reduction as a matter of socio-economic necessity. A subsidy is an economic benefit or financial aid provided by a government to support a desirable activity, so as to keep prices low, maintain the income of the producers of critical or strategic products, maintain employment levels, or induce investment to reduce unemployment

(Schrank, Keithly, & Thalassoroma, 1999). It can tentatively be defined as any government program that potentially permits the firm to increase its profits beyond what they would have been in the absence of the government program (Uhunmwuango & Akintoye, 2016).

The major aim of all subsidies is to reduce the market price of an item below its cost of production. Most subsidies are put in place by the government for producers or are distributed as subventions in an industry to prevent the decline of that industry (e.g., as a result of continuous unprofitable operations) or an increase in the prices of its products or simply to encourage it to hire more labour (as in the case of a wage subsidy). Examples are subsidies to encourage the sale of exports; subsidies on some foods to keep down the cost of living, especially in urban areas; and subsidies to encourage the expansion of farm production and achieve self-reliance in food production. A subsidy is a reverse tax. It is a deliberate attempt by government to support a chosen economic agent - a consumer and a provider and it can be applied in any market that involves the buying and selling of products and or services (Geneva, UNEP 2003). It is basically a government action that decreases the consumption price of the consumer and (or) increases the selling price of the producer.

The history of fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria is rather a long one particularly with the negative effects it has on the polity. Specifically, the story of subsidy removal dates back to 1978 when the then military government of Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo reviewed the upward pump price of fuel which was at 8.4 kobo to 15.37 kobo. From this period, it had been from one subsidy removal to the other (Ering, & Akpan, 2012).

Table 1 provides a clear picture of the different pump prices by the different administrations from 1978 to Jan. 2012.

Table 1

Data on Petroleum Price Increases/Adjustments in Nigeria (1978-2012).

S/N	DATE	ADMINISTRATION	PRICE	% CHANGE
1	1978	Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo (as military ruler)	15.37k	-
2	1982	Alh. Shehu Shagari	20k	-
3	1990	Gen. Ibrahim Babangida	60k	300%
4	1992	Gen. Ibrahim Babangida	70k	17%
5	1992	Gen. Ibrahim Babangida	N3.25k	364%
6	1993	Gen. Ibrahim Babangida	N5.00	54%
7	1994	Chief Ernest Shonekan	N11.00	120%
8	1994/98	Gen. Sanni Abacha	N11.00	-
9	2000	Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	N20.00	82%
10	2000	Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	N22.00	10%
11	2001	Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	N26.00	18%
12	2003	Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	N40.00	54%
13	2004	Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	N45.00	13%
14	2007	Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	N70.00	56%
15	2007	Alh. Umaru Shehu Yardua	N65.00	0.07%
16	2012	Dr. Goodluck Jonathan	N97.00	73%

Source: Ering & Akpan (2012)

The Goodluck Jonathan Administration on 1st January, 2012 announced the total removal of petroleum subsidy. By this singular act, the pump price of fuel increased from sixty-five naira (N65 per litre) to one hundred and forty-five naira (N145 per litre). The resultant effect of this policy option by the Government led to a one-week nation-wide strike with grave consequences for the Nigerian state. The

strike and its aftermath prompted a series of negotiations between the Government on the one hand, and the organized labour (Nigerian Labour Congress), Civil Society Groups (such as Trade Union Congress) and other stakeholders on the other. By January 15, 2012, the Nigerian government announced a reduction in the pump price of petroleum products (for example, fuel to N97) and introduced a new programme called the Subsidy Re-investment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P).

The Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme known as SURE-P is a scheme established by the Federal Government under the Goodluck Jonathan administration, to reinvest the Federal Government savings from fuel subsidy removal on critical infrastructure projects and social safety nets programmes with direct impact on the citizens of Nigeria (New Telegraph, 2015). SURE-P was established in January 2012 when the Federal Government of Nigeria announced the removal of subsidy on Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) (Premium Times, 2015). The scheme was one of the pivots of Transformation Agenda of the Federal Government. Like other intervention measures before it (Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) by the Abacha Administration), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) by the Obasanjo Administration, 7 Points Agenda by the Yar A'dua Administration), SURE-P was meant to cushion the effects of a government policy option and improve the quality of lives of ordinary Nigerians (SURE-P, 2013).

SURE-P was created by the Nigerian government as a response to the public demand for a judicious utilization of the savings from the partial removal of petroleum subsidy. The continuation of subsidies on prices of petroleum products posed a huge financial burden on the government, disproportionately benefits the wealthy, is inefficient and diverts resources away from potential investments in critical infrastructure. The total projected subsidy re-investible funds per annum is N1.134 trillion based on average crude oil price of US\$90 per barrel, out of which N478.49 billion accrues to the federal government (Omofume, 2014). The call was predicated on the perceived integrity deficits of the government (as with others before it) as well as the need to cushion the negative effects of economic fallout of the new policy. Thus, the programme was a 3–4year programme designed to utilize the Federal Government's share of the subsidy by means of mitigating the immediate impact of the removal of fuel subsidy and accelerating economic growth through investments in critically needed infrastructure and safety net projects.

The introduction of the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) was to reinvest the Federal Government's share of the savings arising from the reduction of subsidies on petroleum products into programmes and initiatives that would go a long way to ease the pain of subsidy removal and create a better life for Nigerians. SURE-P therefore ensured that the Federal Government's part of the savings from fuel subsidy removal or reduction was applied on critical infrastructure projects and social safety net programmes that will directly ameliorate the sufferings of Nigerians and mitigate the impact of subsidy removal. The SURE-P program had its area of coverage as; National Primary Health Care Development Agency (Maternal and Child Health Services), Community Services, Women and Youth Empowerment (CSWYE), Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS), SURE-P Public Works, and SURE-P Vocational Training. Others include SURE-P Funds and training; SURE-P roads and bridges and SURE-P Railway.

The objectives of the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) are to:

1. mitigate the immediate impact of the petrol subsidy removal on the population, but particularly for the poor and vulnerable segments. This applies to both the direct and indirect effects of subsidy withdrawal;

2. accelerate economic transformation through investments in critical projects, so as to drive economic growth and achieve the Vision 20:2020
3. lay a foundation for the successful development of a national safety net programme that is better targeted at the poor and most vulnerable in the country on a continuous basis. (Sun Post, cited in Uhumwuangho & Akintoye, 2016).
4. provide of employments for unemployed graduates through internship programs
5. create database of unemployed youth and reduce social vulnerability among the group in the country through the mechanism of the policy (Oladele, 2015)

The objectives of the programme that has direct bearing to poverty reduction includes among others to mitigate the immediate impact of the petroleum subsidy discontinuation on the population, but particularly for the poor and vulnerable segments. This applied to both the direct and indirect effects of subsidy withdrawal (Adamu & Inuwa, 2016). The impact of the programme on the poor was proposed to be mitigated through properly targeted safety net programmes such as public works and employment schemes, maternal and child health, mass transit programmes and vocational training and skills acquisition schemes. Finally, one of the major reasons for these policies by governments was to ameliorate or totally eliminate poverty in Nigeria.

Poverty has always remained an enormous challenge for Nigerians. Suffice it to say that the current trends indicate a significant growth in unemployment and illiteracy which are linked with the high level of poverty in our society (Okorie, 2003 cited in Adamu & Inuwa, 2016). The programme has committees, a steering sub-committee and other sub-committee on Maternal and Child Health, Roads Mass Transit; Public Works and Vocational Training, Community Services, Women and Youth Employment. The committee's mandate included determining, in collaboration with other stakeholders, subsidy estimates for each preceding month and ensuring the funds are transferred to the Central Bank of Nigeria, ensuring orderly disbursements of funds to the programme, as well as monitoring and evaluating the execution of projects.

Over the years, subsidy on petroleum products (petrol, diesel, and kerosene) has been subjected to progressive reduction as a matter of socio-economic necessity. The Nigerian governments with each withdrawal came up with different interventionist measures. While it is true that SURE-P efforts may have been well intentioned, Nigerians were worried whether it is a credible platform for delivering goods and services. The question now is whether the policies and the governments succeeded in addressing this great social problem or not in social economic development.

Impact of SURE-P in Nigeria

1. SURE-P and Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET): In line with the then President Goodluck Jonathan's promise to encourage wealth creation and mitigate the scourge of youth unemployment in the country, the Federal Government through SURE-P developed a TVET programme to be managed by a Project Implementation Unit (PIU) in the Ministry of Labour and Productivity. The PIU managed the implementation of the TVET program which has the mandate to invest in the development of vocational and technical education in Nigeria. The scheme was expected to stimulate the economic growth needed as part of the transformation agenda of the current administration while also enhancing opportunities towards the attainment of Vision 20: 2020 (SURE-P Annual Report, 2012). SURE-P had the mandate to equip young Nigerians with skills in three broad areas: vocational/technical skills, life skills and entrepreneurship. It was targeted at bridging the demand gaps in some industry areas: ICT/Telecoms, Creative (e.g. movies,

- music, fashion, etc) others are Hospitality and Tourism, Agro business, Mass Housing/Construction, Artisans, Marine, Oil and Gas and Mechanical Fabrication/Woodwork.
2. SURE-P and Employment Generation: At the establishment of SURE-P, the Federal Government called for support from the private sector to enable it to address the unemployment situation in the country (Official Website of SURE-P, 2012). The Project Director, Graduate Internship Programme (GIP) of Subsidy Re-investment and Empowerment Programme, Peter Papka, made the call during an orientation and induction programme for interns. The GIP was inaugurated in October, 2012 to create an opportunity for graduates to be attached to firms where they could work for a year and enjoy a monthly stipend of N18000. Such interns can use the opportunity to gain experience and enhance their employability. The researcher noted that in one year of commencement of the programme, there had been over 83,000 beneficiaries. This, he noted, was beyond the threshold of 50,000 allotted for the scheme in any given year. Its objectives are to enhance the employability of up to 50,000 graduates through internship programmes; reduce the vulnerability of unemployed graduates and build manpower base towards attaining national development operations. Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (2015), stated that the programme was part of the government's tripod strategy towards addressing youth unemployment in Nigeria. The tripod strategy, Okonjo-Iweala noted, was anchored on the realisation that the government acknowledged the fact that it could not solve the unemployment problems alone.
 3. SURE-P and Mass Transit: Under the mass transit programme SURE-P collaborated with stake holders in the transport industry by applying parts of its funds to support a revolving loan scheme, for road transport operators across the country. The loan scheme managed by an Infrastructure Bank, helped to reduce the cost of transport to citizens, to cushion the effects of partial fuel subsidy removal. In the year 2012, SURE-P disbursed N8.9 billion for the mass transit programme purposes, out of which 18 registered transport companies nationwide have drawn from, to purchase 809 buses for use of Nigerians (Okwudili & Emmanuel, 2014).
 4. Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Programme: Total number of health care workforce recruited as at July 2013, stood at 6,630 (Ogbebo, 2014). They were deployed to provide quality antenatal, skilled birth delivery at birth and post-natal services for previously underserved rural, poor women accessing maternal, neonatal and child health services in 500 SURE-P supported primary health care (PHC) centres spread across the 36 states and FCT. These health care workers comprised: 1,304 midwives; 254 community health extension workers (CHEWs); and 3,072 female village health workers (VHWs) cut across the six geo-political zones of the country (Okwudili & Emmanuel, 2014).
 5. The Graduate internship programme was part of the nation's tripod strategy for responding to the youth unemployment in Nigeria. This strategy has three layers because of the multi-dimensional nature of unemployment. This tripod strategy was anchored on the realisation of the fact that government alone cannot solve the problem of unemployment in Nigeria. The key to solving unemployment lies with the private sector. This is why a major policy priority is the creation of an enabling environment for businesses to thrive and employ people. SURE-P was established in October 2012 as a social safety net to provide short term employment for graduates.

Impact of SURE-P in Edo State

SURE-P is focused primarily on critical infrastructure projects and social safety net programmes, which directly and positively impact on the people in Edo State. The infrastructure projects include roads, bridges, and railway. On the other hand, the social safety net programmes cover mass transit; maternal and child health; community service, women and youth empowerment (incorporating the Graduate Internship Scheme); public works (under the support of the Federal Emergency Road Maintenance Agency—FERMA); vocational training, as well as culture and tourism. Out of the sum of N411.03

billion that was budgeted to the state governments in July 2012, it was revealed that Edo state government received N9.4 million to provide the social economic need for its citizen. Since then, no matter the amount of money earned as per the excess accruing from the new petroleum pump price, the allocation has remained more or less fixed as the above.

Specifically, SURE-P was a welcome development programme in Edo State as it helped in reducing unemployment in Edo State and made an impact on the lives of the people particularly in the area of skills acquisition, to some extent by providing fund to few persons in the state in running their business, though there is no account for the actual number of person who benefited from the fund in the state but it is believed to have benefited some persons in the state. Sure-P is also important in the area of ensuring that the resources generated from subsidy removal are well invested for the development of our country Nigeria.

Mohammed and Mustapha (2017) in their studies on 'an appraisal of the impact of subsidy reinvestment programme (SURE-P) on empowerment' concluded that the programme succeeded in providing vocational skills training, materials and assistance; promoted gender equality for sustainable development; and increased women's representation in governance. The findings of the study also indicate that a number of skills acquisition centres were constructed and equipped across in the state, which increased the respondents income in the community. The findings of the study further revealed that a number of women have been trained in vocational skills: interior and outdoor decorations, cosmetology and beauty therapy, hair dressing, fashion designing and garment making, etc. which have helped in boosting the respondents economic activities in their communities.

Similarly, for more than two decades the Benin-Ore-Sagamu Expressway had collapsed, and the remedial patchwork that often was carried out on that critical arterial road was as laughable as it was dangerous. SURE-P funding is now making a huge difference that is clearly measurable in the reduced travel times on that route. The Benin-Ore part of the Expressway has been totally reconstructed, while work is proceeding determinedly on the Ore-Sagamu axis (Omafume, 2014). And these have greatly contributed to the socio-economic development of Edo State.

Challenges of SURE-P

In spite of the well-intentioned and well thought out objectives of the SURE-P, like other government initiatives, it had challenges that impeded its smooth running. Some of the challenges that were observed as associated with the programme include:

1. The scheme was overshadowed by suspicions that government's implementation was insincere as stakeholders stated that it was a panic measure that would lead to duplication of roles for which there were appropriate ministries, departments and agencies of government (Mohammed, 2015). Development economists have suggested that the experience of nations is that agencies set up in panic has been inimical to the development of a country.
2. The number of people who benefited from the programmes were small as the scheme was not well popularized among the citizens in the state
3. It is also observed that the SURE-P was not well packaged compared to what was learnt from the media. It was observed that participants were to be given complete relevant kits and a sum of N150, 000.00 (one hundred and fifty thousand Naira) as take-off. This is at complete variance from what was obtained in Edo state, as those trained in husbandry were given two animals worth less than N2000 and a paltry sum of N10, 000 was given as start off grant. (Okoye, 2015)
4. The case of mismanagement of fund was also observed. In 2015, the senate committee set up to look into SURE-P informed the nation that half a trillion naira, which should have been used to

execute SURE-P projects nationwide could not be accounted for. It was apparent that the management of the funds allotted was far from transparent. A discussant in the session summarized as follows: “The empowerment programs are good on paper but their implementations have a lot of shortcomings like training people and not giving them the necessary tools to work with” (Okoye, 2015).

5. Lack of accountability: SURE-P was not a centrally coordinated project. The National Office of the project only intervened in national projects at the federal level, while leaving the states to run the state SURE-P committees. The state committees are known as State Implementation Committees (SICs). The Federal Government, at the outset of the programme, immediately after it reduced the pump price of petroleum as a result of the pressure from Nigerians during the January 2012 protests, said the SURE-P funds dropped from the expected N1.134 trillion to N426 billion following the reduction of PMS pump price from N141 per litre to N97 per litre. But since the inception of the programme, it has not deemed it necessary to brief Nigerians on the actual amount of money saved in the first year from the added pump price (Mohammed, 2013).
6. Lack of continuity: it has been observed since the first poverty alleviation programme established by General Olusegun Obasanjo, Operation Feed the Nation that, on assumption of duty by a new president, there is usually a new initiative. This disrupts the former work in progress and welcomes a new one. The lack of continuity of these programmes stalls the effort of combating poverty. Since inception, poverty eradication in Nigeria has become nothing a regime specific exercise and lack in continuity, leading to little or no impact.
7. Population Growth: There is a high population growth rate – 2.8 per annum, according to the World Bank (2014) which accompanies an already national population of over 167 million people, Akande (2014) asserted. Nigeria has continued to experience high rate of population growth. This increasing population growth has produced an overwhelming increase in the youth population thereby resulting in an increase in the size of the working age population. Related to the rapid population growth is the massive rural-urban migration by the youth. According to the United Nations (UN) Report (1999), the high degree of geographical mobility of youth in Africa is in form of rural to urban which has been influencing youth unemployment. In Nigeria, youth migrate to the cities more than other migrants and in the cities, job opportunities are very limited. Thus, the rate of urbanization of the youth has continued to create unemployment.
8. Lack of employable skills: due to inappropriate school curricula is another factor contributing to the rising youth unemployment. Analysts have argued that in Nigeria generally, the skills that job seekers possess do not match the needs and demands of employers (Mcgrath, 1999; Kent and Mushi, 1995). The trio affirmed that the education system in Nigeria has its liberal bias which indeed over supplies the labour market with graduates who do not possess the skills required by employers. Many graduates in Nigeria lack entrepreneurial skills to facilitate self-employment (Oladele, Akeke and Oladunjoye, 2011).

Conclusion

Considering the present poverty level in the country, it indicates that joblessness and poverty are both deep as a results of societal challenges such as corruption, poor leadership, security, poor governance etc, that constitute danger and threat to socio-economic development. Also, in spite of the numerous policies and programmes initiated by successive Nigerian government especially SURE-P as high and laudable as it seems, their inability to affect the real target, reflects the gap between policy formulation and implementation, hence so, poverty kept soaring high. Then one can conclude that the past poverty reducing programmes have not accomplished much and this is as a result of the challenges and reasons identified as hindering the effective implementation of the government programmes. However, lack of involvement of the target beneficiaries in identifying the right projects coupled with administrative,

corruption, political instability, conflicts, poor financing or funding, wrong attitude of entrepreneur, over population and ineffective public policies and operational failures were among the problems identified among others as hindering the achievement of the objectives of the programme.

Recommendations

1. There is need for continuity in government schemes and policies as it is the key to achieving success and sustainability of initiatives. Government should define procedures that allow a government to continue its essential operations in the event of a new administration
2. It is essential for government to meticulously plan any programme and assess the social and economic impact to its citizens prior to the flagging off the scheme
3. Corruption should be tackled in the areas of misappropriation of fund, tribalism and nepotism.
4. Fund meant for any agency or programme should be judiciously used and the accounts of the agency should be audited from time to time to curb misappropriation of funds
5. Appropriate authorities should endeavour to sensitize the citizens on the need to take advantage of government initiatives, for example, the Graduate Internship Scheme, Maternal and Child Health Initiative, etc

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