

PDF - NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOS) AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SEADOGS (NAS) 2010-2015 - researchcub.info ABSTRACT

Poverty is a major problem in developing countries including Nigeria. In Nigeria, poverty has become endemic, affecting social, political and economic aspects of peoples' lives. Poverty discourse and definitions are multifarious and highly extensive. However, poverty is pronounced when the basic necessities of life, which include adequate income, education, good health, security, self-confidence and certain freedoms, are absent. Literature abounds in expatiating on the subject matter. Furtherance to the discussion is the search for diverse solutions to the bane of poverty especially in developing countries. Despite the fact that poverty is a common phenomenon in many developing countries like Nigeria; it seems to be a unique dilemma that has defied all understanding. The study focused on NGOs and poverty alleviation in Nigeria with special reference to National Association of Seadogs NAS 2010-2015. NAS has been encountering serious challenges in reaching its target areas in its work on poverty alleviation in Nigeria 2010-2015. To this end, the study answered questions such as, to what extent has NAS contributed to poverty alleviation in Nigeria 2010-2015 through its operations and programmes? What are the constraints on effective implementation of NAS poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria 2010-2015? What relevant suggestions can be made to improve on NAS operations in relation to poverty alleviation in Nigeria? This is predicated on three major objectives designed to find out the extent to which NAS has contributed to poverty alleviation in Nigeria 2010-2015 through its operation and programmes, to identify the constraints to effective implementation of NAS poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria 2010-2015 and to outline relevant suggestions to improve on NAS operations with respect to poverty alleviation in Nigeria. The study was anchored on the theory of humanism postulated by Kenneth Kaunda. Three hypothetical statements guided the work. They are, NAS operations have significantly contributed to poverty alleviation in Nigeria 2010-2015; Lack of funds, impassable roads and rewards are significant constraints on effective implementation of NAS poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria 2010-2015; and there is a significant positive relationship between NAS operations and the suggested improvements to poverty alleviation programmes. The study suggested that grants and assistance from government will improve the poverty alleviation performance of NAS. Also, construction of passable roads will increase NAS access to the very poor in rural areas of Nigeria.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The wave of poverty, economic backwardness, dearth of infrastructure, health challenges, unemployment, and natural disaster in rural and urban areas are currently some of the most serious problems in the world. Over 1.5 billion people of the world's population live below the poverty line of one dollar per day; out of which 250 million people are from Sub-Saharan Africa (UNDP, 2008; Agba, Ushie, Ushie, Bassey & Agba (2009). The Federal Office of Statistics Report indicated that about 15 per cent of Nigerians in 1969 were poor; this number increased to 28 percent in 1980 and in 1985, it was 46 percent but dropped to 43 percent in 1992. The estimated incidence of poverty in 1996 was 66 million out of 120 million Nigerians. It was also reported in 2003 that 41.6 percent of Nigerians were poor, of which majority were in rural communities (Aliyu, 2003).

Poverty is a major problem in developing countries including Nigeria. In Nigeria, poverty has become endemic, affecting social, political and economic aspects of people's lives (Enugu State Poverty Reduction Strategy (ESPRS) Report, 2004). With a population of about 125 million and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of \$280 in 1998, two-thirds of Nigerians are poor, thus rating her as the country with the third highest number of poor people in the world (UNDP Report, 2003). Most of these poor people are dependent on micro and small-scale farm and off-farm enterprises for their livelihood. The Enugu State Agricultural Development Programme Report (ENADEP, 2001) revealed that the standard per capita income in sub-Saharan Africa stands at \$1 per day. With 70% of the Nigerian population living below this accepted standard (ESPRS (2004), it means that about ninety five (95) million Nigerians were living under the poverty line. Again, poverty in Nigeria is deep and widespread, and has a very strong rural dimension. About 69.8% of Nigerians reside in the rural areas and more than two-thirds of the extreme poor, living in these areas are farmers (Ingawa, 2001). These people depend directly or indirectly on agriculture and related activities for their livelihood.

Poverty discourse and definitions are multifarious and highly extensive. However, poverty is pronounced when the basic necessities of life, which include adequate income, education, good health, security, self-confidence and certain freedoms, are absent. Literature abounds in expatiating on the subject matter. Furtherance to the discussion is the search for diverse solutions to the bane of poverty especially in developing countries. Despite the fact that poverty is a common phenomenon in many developing countries like Nigeria; it seems to be a unique dilemma that has defied all understanding. Not even the economist's interpretation and reasoning of the problem as "a natural resource curse" in the case of Nigeria can fully explain the country's mass poverty (Adedeji, 2010).

Over several decades, poverty and its associated problems have remained some of the most defining as well as enduring features of most African states, especially Nigeria. Thus, according to UNDP Human Development Report in Nigeria (2003), the poverty incidence in the country is more preponderant as it remains unabated in rural areas, where poverty alleviation supportive programmes are in short supply and most times non-existent. Besides, and considering the effect it has in recent times, the situation has become more worrisome. Furthermore, this has in turn, presented Nigeria as a contradictory state (Ikejiani-Clark and Ezech, 2008; Nwanolue and Iwuoha, 2012). In a bid to redress the foregoing poverty situation, successive

Nigerian governments (colonial, civilian and military) had indeed, initiated and executed a number of poverty alleviation programmes. As a member of the United Nations and a signatory to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Nigeria is a part of the world league of poverty-fighters through capacity building, capacity acquisition and enhancement.

In the midst of the dilemma, the people are finding means to lift themselves out of poverty or at least alleviate it. 'Top-down' approaches by governments towards poverty alleviation have now been partially superseded by locally driven strategies. These strategies, which are based in host communities, are motivated by the desire to improve local conditions and encourage local entrepreneurs.

The rapid growth of NGOs has been clearly revealed in a major multi-nation study conducted by Lester Salamon, (1998) who finds it as a major economic and social force. He remarks that the global rise of the non-profit sector may be as important a development of the later twentieth century as the development of the nation-state was in the nineteenth century. A surprisingly large scale of non-profit activity was found in almost every place the study team looked. The study, covering countries like France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, UK, the USA, Brazil, Ghana, India, Nigeria and supports the view that the sector is undoubtedly making fast strides in many spheres of human activity. The sector, as the study shows, has turned out to be a big employer offering employment to seven million people in the US, 1.4 million in Japan, nearly one million in France, Germany and the UK combined. It forms an average of 3.4 percent of these countries total work forces employing one in every 11 workers holding service jobs. It is also found that the sector is spending huge sums varying from 1.2 percent of the GDP in Hungary to 6.3 percent in the US with an average of 3.5 percent.

Apparently, the growth of the NGOs has been phenomenal particularly during the last two decades. The presence of the NGOs, especially those engaged in developmental efforts, has been strongly felt during these years. In fact, the involvement of NGOs in development has become indispensable today. It is estimated that about 10 percent – \$8 billion of public development aid world-wide is now being routed through NGOs. Again, Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) are non-governmental, non-profit creation, self-governing and led by willful volunteers. NGOs are groupings that are outside the domain of government in the areas of formation, funding, management and the processes and procedure in which they carry out their set objectives geared towards cultural, socio-economic and political transformation of all facets of the society. NGOs function alongside the government as well as profit-based enterprises in delivery of social services for the upliftment and well-being of the society, they are therefore referred to as the third sector, (Ehigiamusoe 1998).

Today, the NGOs in Nigeria assume a conspicuous role in multifarious developmental programmes and activities. The achievements and success of NGOs in various fields and the excellent work done by them in specific areas is no doubt a tremendous task that has helped to meet the changing needs of the social system. However, in spite of its achievements in various fields, NGOs are facing different problems which differ from organization to organization, and from region to region.

NGOs are organizations that ensure that the active poor in the rural and urban areas improve their standard of living through coordinated economic activities. Omofonmwan and Odia (2009) emphasized that NGOs evolve from experiences, interests, and innate zeal to respond to societal needs. NGOs have important contributions in increasing the welfare of the poor people. Many NGOs have various activities to empower the poor people.

This is in preference to a 'smokestack' chasing approach of seeking investment by large scale, external firms (Stohr, 1990). Such strategies as self-help and communal efforts have become common places especially in developing countries.

As hunger, disease, outbreak of wars, incidence of kidnapping, natural disaster and massive poverty ravage the Nigerian Federation, governments, international agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are leaving no stone unturned in fighting this social monster (Mohammed, 1991, Akpanudoedehe, 2006; Agba, Agba, Okoro & Agba, 2010). National Association of Seadogs (NAS), an NGO in Nigeria assists to contribute to national development in the areas of democracy and good governance, public advocacy, healthcare delivery, education and functional literacy, the development of the street child, environment, conflict resolution, drug abuse and human rights. (NAS Annual Report 2015)

NAS does perform several functions, geared towards the provision of means of livelihood to lift the people out of poverty or reduce its intensity. The strategies may be direct or indirect and mostly solely initiated and sustained by the organisation.

NAS is a multi-professional organization aimed at contributing to the reduction of human suffering and to the development of poor rural areas across Nigeria. They do this in various ways, e.g. by funding projects, engaging in service provision and capacity building, public advocacy and awareness. An example is the Street Child Project focused on taking the Nigerian child off the street and giving the child a more meaningful life. Another is the NAS Medical Mission, ensuring healthcare delivery to the rural communities and oft-neglected areas of the society. As reported by Onochie (2015), the NAS Medical Mission was established with a vision to reach the indigent Nigerians needing medical help in targeted rural communities, with special references to non-referral ailments. The NAS Medical Mission was taken to new heights in 2015 with individual chapters doing NAS proud with their localized support of the programme. Again, one of the high points of this initiative was the construction, commissioning and handover on February 4, 2015 of a fully equipped, air conditioned and functional ICT/library to the Street Child Care and Welfare Initiative (SCCWI), Yaba, Lagos; a charity that protects the rights and lives of street children through participatory, long-term education and residency (NAS Annual Report 2015). NAS has contributed to poverty alleviation in Nigeria over the years but has also experienced some obstacles in its poverty alleviation programmes. NAS though a Nigerian-based NGO, has a global presence with spread across five (5) continents, North America, Europe, Australia, Asia and Africa where it is involved in voluntary human development activities. (National Association of Seadogs website).

NAS as an NGO is a non-profit voluntary organization deeply committed to the attainment of a just society, in strict observance of the rule of law, where the interests and welfare of the poor, marginalized, neglected, underprivileged, impoverished, downtrodden and the needy members of the society are protected and attended.

This paper focuses on NGOs and Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria; a study of NAS 2010-2015. As evident in NAS annual reports 2013-2015, it will expose to an extent the effectiveness of such efforts and also reveal expectations from the people in order to better appreciate the contribution by NAS

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