

National Social Investment Programmes in Nigeria: A Descriptive Analysis of the Socio-Economic Contributions of N-Power Programme in Benue State

Robert Idoko Ogwola

Federal University, Gashua, Nigeria

Dennis Anyebe Olofu

National Council for Arts and Culture, Garki-Abuja, Nigeria

Charles Amobi Aneke

Federal University, Gashua, Nigeria

This study analysed the socio-economic contributions of N-Power programme amongst the beneficiaries of the scheme in Benue State. Prior to the introduction of N-Power programme, successive administrations in Nigeria have made concerted efforts towards improving the standard of living of the citizenry through the execution of various welfare or social intervention programmes, but not much successes were recorded. Learning from the mistakes of the past regimes, and by way of deliberate state policy, the Buhari's government initiated a multi-pronged social investment policy, one of which is the N-power programme that came onboard in 2016, which also doubles as the subject of this study. To achieve the goal of this study, a combination of desktop research and survey design was employed. Questionnaires were administered to 390 respondents through a combination of stratified and random sampling techniques. The results of the survey were matched with that of the secondary data obtained through online websites and other related sources. The result indicated that N-Power made positive contributions to the socio-economic life of the beneficiaries in Benue State: specifically, the scheme contributed in poverty eradication, employment generation, skills acquisitions and capacity building. However, some aspect of our findings revealed that the programme has a number of challenges such as: inadequate cash support, delay in monthly cash transfer to beneficiaries, distance participants had to move to their work stations, absence of posting in N-Teach scheme, and lack of adequate working tools amongst others. To salvage this problem the paper recommended the following solutions: expansion of the scheme to cover N-Teach and other aspects, increment in the monthly cash transfer to cushion the high rate of inflation, support for the participants/beneficiaries in transportation and logistics, enrolment of more youth into the various schemes, proper monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the schemes amongst others.

Keywords: national, social investment programme, N-Power, contributions, socio-economic development

Idoko Robert Ogwola, Ph.D., senior lecturer, Department of Public Administration, Federal University, Gashua, Nigeria.

Dennis Anyebe Olofu, Ph.D., assistant director, National Council for Arts and Culture, Garki-Abuja, Nigeria.

Charles Amobi Aneke, M.Sc. assistant lecturer, Department of Accounting, Federal University, Gashua, Nigeria.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Idoko Robert Ogwola, Department of Public Administration, Federal University, Gashua, Nigeria.

Introduction

Regardless of the socio-economic and political ideologies or persuasions of any country or society, social investment or welfare programmes are considered vital to the sustainable development of human capital. The European Union (EU) in particular appears to understand this conjecture much better as it leads the rest of the global regions in the implementation of Social Investment Programmes (SIPs) mainly to support the vulnerable class in their societies (Onah & Olise, 2019). It enjoins member states to adopt same in their respective nations (Frazer & Sobato, 2015, cited in Onah & Olise, 2019).

SIP is a broad-based welfare policy covering vast areas such as childhood education, active labour market policies, retraining and lifelong education, healthcare, housing support, among others (Boughet et al., 2015. p. 4). In 2013, when the report of the EU Commission SIPs was released, 39 member countries of EU had already commenced the implementation of social investment policies in their respective countries. The above understanding might have influenced the decision of President Muhammadu Buhari and his All Progressive Congress (APC) party to have come up with the vision that crystalized into the N-Power programmes, in 2015/2016, chiefly to address the vicious problems of youth unemployment and ravaging poverty among vulnerable Nigerians.

Thus, coming on board into power on May 19th, 2015, Muhammadu Buhari's administration was faced with a lot of daunting national development challenges: These problems range from the high levels of poverty and unemployment to insecurity, bad governance, and underdevelopment; just to mention but these few. Although previous administrations had initiated some series of development programmes to address the menace, not much was left to be desired. Documented evidence proves that a vast number of Nigerians were and are still living below the poverty line (Bello & Ayodele, 2018; Lamidi & Igbokwe, 2021; NBS, 2019). For example, an estimated 100 million Nigerians (62.6 per cent of the population) live below the international poverty line (measured in Purchasing Power Parity [PPP] measured in the sum of US\$1.25 per day).

Unemployment also doubled from 6.4 per cent in 2014 to 14.2 per cent in 2017 (Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning [FMBNP], 2017. p. 16); and this trend continues up till the period this study is being carried out. The rate of inequality (Gini Coefficient of 43 per cent), not just concerning income but also in terms of access to basic social services and employment opportunities, was reportedly high (p. 16).

The high level of poverty in Nigeria has been exacerbated by low Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita. In addition, the poor performance of the social sector, high level of insecurity (due partly to Boko Haram insurgency, bandit activities, and Herdsmen attack on rural farmers) and high rate of unemployment, among others issues, have inevitably clogged the wheel of national progress. As a way of mitigating the widespread poverty and unemployment with the attendant consequences, the Buhari's administration initiated the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) in 2016, in anticipation that human capital would be impacted positively (Onah & Olise, 2019).

Presently in Nigeria, as available data has shown, 40.1 per cent of the total population is classified as poor. In other words, on average 4 of 10 individuals in Nigeria have real per capita expenditures below 137,430 Naira per year. This translates to over 82.9 million Nigerians who are considered poor by national standards. (NBS, 2019, p. 6)

A significant proportion of the above number of poor people are youths. For example, statistics about youth unemployment in 2019 in

the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria indicate that 26.3 percent of youth in the North-West could not secure job followed by South West (23.4 percent) while North-West and South-South (14.2 per cent) and (14 per cent) respectively, could not

secure job. In the same vein, youths in the South East (12.5 per cent) and the North Central (9.5 per cent) were unemployed. (Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development [FMYSO], 2021, p. 34)

And those youths who had jobs were grossly under paid, and had no voice of their own at their places of work.

The above background provided the incentive on which this study is being contemplated and anchored. As expected, the circumstances above crystalized or snowballed into what analysts or commentators termed as the Buhari's SIPs, one of which we referred to as the N-Power programmes, and of course, the main subject of this study.

Statement of the Problem

Prior to 2015, when the idea of N-SIP and N-Power was mooted, poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment were high among a large proportion of Nigerians, especially the youths and other vulnerable groups. This is against the backdrop that Nigeria is considered as a land flowing with milk and honey across all of its four territorial corners (North, West, East, and South). Thus with equitable distribution of available resources, Nigerians should have no business being in poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment.

Ironically, despite Nigeria's vast human and natural resources potential, a huge number of her people are living below the poverty line. Despite previous efforts to use social investment programmes as a tool for engendering socio-economic development, the menace of poverty and unemployment persisted. It is against this backdrop that we elect to examine the potential of or likelihood that the N-Power programme would be able to achieve targeted development milestones as contained in the programmes' objectives. Several studies have been conducted in different areas of N-SIP of which N-Power is a component (Bello & Ayodele, 2018; Ofa, 2016; Lamidi & Igbokwe, 2021; NBS, 2021). But none of these studies specifically, to the best of our knowledge, examined the level of implementation of the objectives of the N-Power as encapsulated in the different portfolios of the programmes within the three Senatorial Districts in Benue State. This implies a gap in the literature that should be filled, and this work has attempted to accomplish this lofty purpose.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to analyse the contributions of the N-Power programmes to the socio-economic development of the beneficiaries in Benue State. However, the specific objectives of this study include the following:

1. To ascertain the contributions of N-Power programmes to the socio-economic development of the beneficiaries in Benue State.
2. To analyse the problems constraining effective implementation of N-Power programmes in Benue State.

Research Questions

The following research questions are framed to guide this study.

1. How has N-Power programmes contributed to the socio-economic development of the beneficiaries in Benue State?
2. What are they challenges constraining effective implementation of the N-Power programmes in Benue State?

Scope of the Study

This study examined the contributions of N-Power programme to the socio-economic development of Nigeria; however, specific emphasis is placed on the contribution of N-Power programme towards the socio-economic development of the beneficiaries in the three Senatorial Districts in Benue State. However, the scope of this study is delimited to the job creation and youth empowerment component of N-SIP, famously christened as N-Power programme. N-Power is job creation and youth employment programme for individuals between 18-35 years of age. Initiated by the Nigerian Federal Government, the N-Power initiative is a programme aimed at providing a platform where most citizens, especially the youths, can acquire skills and develop themselves economically.

Conceptualisation of Terms

The following terms are briefly defined:

1. **Skills:** A skill is seen as the ability to do something well and with dexterity; it is usually acquired through training or experience. Skills are often acquired after a training session or after a practical lesson.
2. **Skills acquisition:** Skills acquisition, in the context of this study, is the process of learning or acquiring skills purposively to enhance competence of the trainee in work-related operations. It could involve the development of a new skill or improving the trainee's expertise on previous principles or practice of doing things, usually gained through training or experience.
3. **Unemployment:** For this study it implies a situation whereby youths or other job seekers within the labour force found it difficult to secure meaningful job for their livelihood. According to International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2015), unemployed is the proportion of those in the labour force (not in the entire economic active population, nor the entire Nigerian population) who were actively looking for work but could not find work for at least 20 hours during the reference period to the total currently active (labour force) population.
4. **Underemployment:** Underemployment however occurs if you work less than full time hours, which is 40 hours, but work at least 20 hours on average a week and/or if you work full time but are engaged in an activity that underutilizes your skills, time, and educational qualifications (NBS, 2018).
5. **Empowerment:** is the capacity of men and women of Benue State to participate and contribute to, and benefit from economic activities processes, in ways that recognise the value of their contributions, respect their dignity, and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of economic growth for the sustainability of Benue State.
6. **Poverty:** is the state of not having enough material possessions or income for meeting a person's basic needs. Poverty may include social, economic, and political elements.
7. **Youth empowerment:** is a process where young people are encouraged to take charge of their lives by acquiring skills and engaging in productive labour that adds value to their lives.

Methods of the study

Research Design

This study adopted a combination of desktop research and descriptive survey methods, with emphasis on the cross-sectional survey design. According to Kpolovie (2020) cited in Ogwola (2022), descriptive survey is used to investigate the magnitude and direction of the relationship that exist between two or more variables. A descriptive survey attempts to establish the range and distribution of some socio-economic characteristics, such

as the N-Power programme being the Independent Variable (IV), on the contributions of the former to the development of Benue State being the Dependent Variable (DV). Descriptive research aims to accurately and systematically describe a population, situation/event, or phenomenon. It thus answers the questions: what, where, when, and how things are. The design is appropriate for the study because it enables the researcher to examine the impact of the N-Power programme (contributions) on the socio-economic development of beneficiaries in Benue State of Nigeria.

Population of the Study

The population of this research work comprised the beneficiaries of the N-Power programme in Benue State. According to the State Coordinator of the N-Power programme in Benue State, there are 15,000 beneficiaries of N-Power Batch C Stream 1. The sample for the study was derived from the above population of beneficiaries in area. The sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane statistical formula as indicated before.

Taro Yamene formula:

$$\frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

where N = population, e = 0.05, $(e)^2 = 0.005^2 = 0.0025$.

Thus,

$$\frac{15,000}{1 + 15,000 \times 0.0025}$$

$$\frac{15,000}{1 + 38} = 15,000$$

$$38.5 = 389.6, \text{ approximately, } 390.$$

Therefore, the sample size for this study is 390 respondents.

Thereafter, a stratified random sampling technique was adopted in the selection of respondents across the different strata needed for the study. The respondents were classified based on the three Senatorial Districts in Benue State. The researcher adopted a random sampling technique in selecting 390 from each Senatorial District in Benue State. The table below gives a brief description of the sample size randomly selected from each of the Senatorial Districts in Benue State.

Table 1

Area of the Study and Sample Size Distribution

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Senatorial District of respondents	Benue North-East	130	33.3
	Benue South	130	33.3
	Benue North West	130	33.3
	Total	390	100.0

Source: Researcher, 2022.

For a convenient selection of sample for this study, the respondents were grouped into three strata based on the Senatorial Districts. In Benue North-East 130 (33.3%) was chosen while in Benue North-East and Benue South 130 (33.3%) and 133 (33.3%) were chosen respectively. This number was considered enough and adequate given the statistical requirements, time frame, and available resources for the study.

Literature Review

The Concept of N-Power Programme

The N-Power programme is part of the Nigeria Federal Government's National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) scheme for job creation, poverty reduction, and voluntary empowerment (Nwaobi, 2019). It aims to imbue the culture of entrepreneurship in Nigerian young people between the ages of 18-35 (NSIP, 2018) in terms of employability and improvements in the standard of living.

The N-Power is an initiative of the federal government designed to promote rural/urban development in Nigerian communities (Ofa, 2016). It emphasises that the beneficiaries in most of the programmes not only derive a contribution to growth from rural areas of education, health, and farming but also are deployed into remote areas to assist government in service delivery. N 30,000 (thirty thousand naira) monthly grants are awarded to the beneficiaries as conditional cash transfer. The N-Power programme, as it is framed, is multi-sectorial, encompassing both rural and urban communities. It is an integrated rural development strategy, in the sense that it targets to facilitate development in the rural areas from a multipronged approach. As noted, N-Power comprises N-Teach, N-Health, N-Agro, N-Vaids, N-Build, N-Creative, etc. The recipients of the N-Power programme are continuously drawn from both city and remote areas. This describes the programme's coordinated approach to rural development.

Thus the N-Power is a prototype of National Social Investment Programmes (NSIP). The Federal Government of Nigeria established the National Social Investment Programmes (NSIP) in 2015 and launched it in 2016. NSIP is a portfolio of programmes devised to support the underprivileged or vulnerable Nigerians across the country by reducing poverty and improving their standard of living through direct support, capacity building, and other forms of investments. The National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) is divided into four major programmes namely:

- National Home Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP);
- Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP);
- Job creation and youth employment (N-Power); and
- National Social Safety Net Programme.

It is expected that at the end of the programme, applicants should be able to attain some level of financial independence. N-Power is to create an equal opportunity for every eligible Nigerian and select eligible applicants through the details provided. The online application process enables direct cash payment through the bank details (bank name, account number, and the bank BVN (Biometric Verification Number) submitted by each applicant or beneficiary. The volunteers of N-Power are given devices containing relevant contents alongside ₦30,000 stipend which is usually paid monthly. The contents contained in the device encourage continuous learning. They also facilitate the volunteers' ability to implement the chosen vocation successfully. The N-Power programme is open to both graduates and non-graduates in Nigeria.

The N-Power Teach

The N-Power Teach is a post-tertiary project for Nigerian youth under the N-Power Volunteer Company, subject to amendment by the appropriate body, which has a paid two-year voluntary programme. It consists of auxiliary teachers in public schools, who are working in predominantly deprived communities to enhance their basic education.

N-Power Health

The beneficiaries under the N-Health are deployed to serve as public health assistants in public health facilities at designated centres.

N-Power Agro

Volunteers in this category are required to provide farmers with advice by disseminating N-Power knowledge necessary for harnessing farm assets in Nigeria.

In general, the non-graduate scheme aims to provide the necessary technical and entrepreneurial knowledge for non-graduates in order to enhance their skills, whilst graduate employees are engaged in public institutions in their neighbourhoods and make important contributions in specific areas. Computing devices or facilities are given that they contain the knowledge required for continuous training (Adeyanju, 2016).

Empirical Review

Many studies have been conducted in the aspect of skills acquisition and unemployment. Bashir, John, and Mbagha (2017) cited in Ogwola (2022) investigated Technical Skills Acquisition Programmes (TSAPs) and its implications on job creation. They found that unemployment is a national catastrophe that can be tackled with sustained efforts geared towards providing young people with requisite knowledge, skills, and conducive environment to develop. These could be achieved through the Technical Skills Acquisition Programmes which is capable of providing means of livelihood, help in poverty reduction and mass employment of youth, and promote entrepreneurship. They therefore recommend provision of legal framework and national policy for combating unemployment, adequate budgetary provision for technical education, political and economic stability and access to flexible financial services.

Ekong and Ekong (2016) cited in Ogwola (2022) investigated how unemployment problem is tackled through skills acquisition by the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in Akwa Ibom State. They utilized both secondary and primary data; the secondary data utilized ranged from the period 1987 to 2012. They found that positive link exists between skills acquisition by NDE and unemployment reduction in Akwa Ibom State, albeit without daunting challenges. They recommend more spread of NDE training centres to all the local government areas in the state for more benefits to be maximised

Adofu and Ocheja (2013) cited in Ogwola (2022) investigated the conduct of skill acquisition and training in alleviating poverty and unemployment in Kogi State, Nigeria. This relationship between entrepreneurship skill acquisition and poverty/unemployment was analysed using descriptive statistics. The descriptive tools consisted of the use of percentages and frequencies presented in a tabular form. A chi-square test (χ^2) was employed to test the validity or otherwise of the effect of entrepreneurship skill acquisition on poverty alleviation and unemployment reduction in Nigeria using primary data obtained in six local government areas that made up the four districts of the state. The result shows that 65% of the respondents accepted that lack of entrepreneurship skills among youth is responsible for the high rate of poverty/unemployment in Nigeria. The result also revealed that at least 60% of the people that benefitted from the skills acquisition programme can now afford the basic necessity of life (Kwaghe, 2006 in Ogwola, 2022, p. 35).

Ogundele, Akingbade, and Akinlabi (2012) explored the impact of National Directorate of Employment Programmes on graduate employment and unemployment in Kaduna State of Nigeria, using both secondary data as well as oral interview. He found out that the impact of NDE on graduate employment in Kaduna State has not been particularly positive and much still needs to be done. Only modest achievement in the area of generation of

graduate employment has so far been recorded, calling for a thorough reappraisal of its programme in order to overhaul the system.

Theoretical Foundation: Human Capital Development Theory

This research adopted the human capital theory propounded by G. S. Becker in 1967. Human capital theory suggests that training and development raises the performance of workers by imparting useful knowledge and skills, hence raising worker's future income by increasing their lifetime earnings. The human capital theory opined that a well-trained personnel is a productive person and suggests that an individual's decision to invest in training is based upon an examination of the net present value of the costs and benefits of such an investment (Becker, 1967 in Ogwola, 2022). Individuals are assumed to invest in training during an initial period and receive returns of the investment in subsequent periods. Thus, human capital is a means of production, with which additional investment yields additional output.

The human capital theory as defined above contends that the human being is a social as well as economic capital, which is very strategic for wealth creation and accumulation. The more developed and advanced the human capital is made to be (through education and training), the better it is positioned to contribute to national development.

The dominant paradigm in the economics of education is Human Capital Theory, which suggests that education and training are investments that make individuals genuinely more productive. Individuals who are more productive will, according to this theory, also have higher earnings and be more employable. The private economic return to investing in education or training, that is, the gain to the individuals, can therefore be measured by the net gain in lifetime earnings accruing as a result of their investment in education or training. (Carneiro, Dearden, & Vignoles, 2010, p. 35)

With the above explanation of human capital theory by its proponent Becker (1967) cited in Ogwola (2022, p. 35), the theory is thus seen as one of the most relevant conceptions for explaining human development and empowerment in Nigeria. By developing the skills and potentials of the beneficiaries of N-Power programme through the various empowerment schemes (especially those focusing of education and skills development), not only that jobs are created and poverty reduced, but also that the quality of life of the beneficiaries is enhanced such that they are in the position to contribute meaningfully to national development

Data Presentation and Discussion

This chapter deals with the presentation of data and analysis of findings as well as the discussion of findings. The analysis is presented as follow.

Table 2

Questionnaire Return Rate

	Administered questionnaires	Returned/relevant questionnaires	Unreturned questionnaires
Number	390	380	10
Percentage		97.4% of the sample (390)	2.6% of the sample (390)

Source: Field survey (2022).

Table 2 showed the questionnaire return rate. It was earlier indicated that 390 questionnaires were administered to respondents, out of which 380 questionnaires representing 97.4% of the sample were retrieved and found relevant while 10 questionnaires representing 2.6% of the sample were not returned.

Research Question Two: How has N-Power programmes contribute to the socio-economic development of the beneficiaries?

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics on How N-Power Programmes Contribute to the Socio-Economic Development of the Beneficiaries (N = 380, Criterion = 2.50)

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.	Remark
5	Employment generation	164	163	--	53	3.15	0.98	Agreed
6	Skills acquisition and empowerment	124	204	43	7	3.18	0.70	Agreed
7	Financial empowerment and investment opportunity	121	119	122	18	2.90	0.91	Agreed
8	Social security	159	121	41	59	3.00	1.07	Agreed
9	Poverty reduction	158	119	77	26	3.08	0.94	Agreed
	Grand Mean					3.06	0.92	Agreed

Source: Field survey (2022).

Table 3 showed how N-Power programmes contribute to the socio-economic development of the beneficiaries. The table showed that N-Power programmes contribute to the socio-economic development of the beneficiaries by generating employment (Mean = 3.15, Std. = 0.98), providing skill acquisition and empowerment (Mean = 3.18, Std. = 0.70), granting financial empowerment (Mean = 2.90, Std. = 0.91), providing social security (Mean = 3.00, Std. = 1.07), and by reducing poverty (Mean = 3.08, Std. = 0.94).

Research Question Three: What are the challenges constraining effective implementation of the N-Power programmes in Benue State?

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics on the Challenges Constraining Effective Implementation of the N-Power Programmes in Benue State (N = 380, Criterion = 2.50)

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.	Remark
10	Delay in paying allowances	190	115	39	36	3.21	0.97	Agreed
11	Unpaid allowances	240	120	--	20	3.53	0.75	Agreed
12	Distance to working place	242	119	--	19	3.54	0.74	Agreed
13	No teachers' training programmes for N-Teach beneficiaries	73	226	37	44	2.86	0.86	Agreed
14	Administrative bottleneck	201	160	--	19	3.43	0.74	Agreed
15	Political interest	40	324	--	16	3.02	0.52	Agreed
	Grand Mean					3.26	0.76	Agreed

Source: Field survey (2022).

Table 4 above revealed the challenges facing the effective implementation of the N-Power programmes in Benue State. It was revealed that delay in paying allowances (Mean = 3.21, Std. = 0.97), unpaid allowances (Mean = 3.53, Std. = 0.75), distance to working place (Mean = 3.54, Std. = 0.74), no teachers' training programmes for N-Teach (Mean = 2.86, Std. = 0.86), administrative bottleneck (Mean = 3.43, Std. = 0.74), and political interest (Mean = 3.02, Std. = 0.52) are the challenges facing the effective implementation of the N-Power programmes in Benue State.

Summary of Findings

On how N-Power programmes contributed to the socio-economic development of the beneficiaries, the study revealed that N-Power programmes contributed to the socio-economic development of the beneficiaries with a grand Mean of 3.06 and Standard Deviations of 0.70, by generating employment, providing skill acquisition and empowerment, granting financial empowerment, providing social security, and reducing poverty in Benue State. The main objectives of the N-Power scheme were to provide empowerment to the unemployed youths and the programme was split into different segments to achieve results of bridging the gap in the workforce in health, education, and agriculture. As indicated in the result, this objective was achieved to some reasonable extent.

On the challenges constraining effective implementation of the N-Power programmes in Benue State, the data on Table 5 with the Grand Mean and Standard Deviation of 3.26, 0.76 respectively revealed the challenges facing the effective implementation of the N-Power programmes in Benue State. It was revealed that the challenges confronting the implementation of N-power programme in Benue State include: Delay in paying allowances, unpaid allowances, long distance to working place, lack of teachers' training programmes for N-Teach and administrative bottleneck, and political interest had all posed as challenges facing the effective implementation of the N-Power programmes in Benue State.

Conclusion

Despite the huge natural resource endowment, a large proportion of Nigerians are poor and living miserable lives. This contradiction presents a startling paradox; but sad as it seems, it is the reality in Nigeria. It is against this background, coupled with the need to fulfill its electoral promises, that the APC government led by President Buhari initiated its social investment programmes (of which the N-Power is a component) to combat the scourge of unemployment and poverty among vulnerable Nigerians, especially the youths. Thus, the N-Power is a prototype of National Social Investment Programme (NSIP). The Federal Government of Nigeria established the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) in 2015 and launched it in 2016. NSIP is a portfolio of programmes devised to support the underprivileged or vulnerable Nigerians across the country by reducing poverty and improving their standard of living through direct support, capacity building, and other forms of investments. Regardless of the previous efforts to use social investment programmes as tools for engendering socio-economic development, the menace of poverty and unemployment persists. It was against this backdrop that the study became a necessity. It was revealed that the objectives of N-Power programmes are achieved in Benue State to a high extent. However, delay in paying allowances, unpaid allowances, distance to working place, low teachers' training programmes for N-Teach, administrative bottleneck, and excessive political interest hinder the N-Power programme in the state.

Recommendations

Based on the study's theoretical and empirical findings, it is necessary to recommend as follows:

1. More efforts should be geared towards evaluating and monitoring the programme in order to reckon more achievements. This can be achieved if the authority initiates a deliberate monitoring and control mechanism to fastrack the implementation of N-Power programmes or portfolios.
2. In order to ameliorate the challenge of inadequate funding, government should disburse more funds to aid smooth implementation of the scheme, as it has shown to be a tool that has contributed or is contributing positively to the socio-economic development of the beneficiaries.

3. National Social Investment initiative in Nigeria should be further intensified with the view to combating poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment.

4. With regards to the problem of high transportation cost faced by participants, posting of N-Power participants should be done bearing in mind the proximity to the place of residence of the participants. This would reduce the cost of transportation and thereby facilitate their punctuality to work.

5. Besides the cash transfer to beneficiaries, the authority of N-Power programme in Nigeria needs to invest more on skills acquisition programme. The purpose of this proposal is predicated on the understanding that skills development equips participants with hands-on skills and competence necessary for task performance. In addition, if this happens, the employability of the beneficiary would be further elevated.

6. A middle income economy such as Nigeria can develop faster when the state invests more in improving the capacity of the vulnerable population. Social investment such as the N-Power programme has demonstrated—based on the findings of this study—that direct government intervention in the socio-economic life of the citizens could prove to be beneficial. Thus it is recommended that the government, businesses, and civil societies should expand their social responsibilities to include investment in the socio-economic well-being of the ordinary or poor members of the society through capacity-building, financial empowerment, and direct material support

References

- Adeyanju, H. (2016). Young graduates' perception of the N-Power programme and its poverty alleviation impact in Nigeria. *The Journal of Positive Psychology and Counselling*, 1(1), 9-17.
- Bello, F. N., & Ayodele, S. O. (2018). Nigerian youth perception of "N-Power" social investment programme as a tool for youth empowerment. *1st International Conference on "Humanities and the Challenges of Poverty in Africa in the 21st Century"*. Faculty of Arts, Kaduna State University, Kaduna Nigeria. 5th-8th February, 2018.
- Bouget, D., Frazer, H., Marlier, F., Sabato, S., & Vanherske, B. (2015). *Social investment in Europe: A study of national policies*. Brussel: European Commission.
- Carneiro, P., Dearden, L., & Vignoles, A. (2010). Human capital theory. In *International encyclopedia of education* (3rd ed.) (pp. 255-261). Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-044894-7.01737-1>
- FMBNP (Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning). (2017). *Economic recovery & growth plan, 2017-2020*. Federal Government of Nigeria.
- FMYSO (Federal Ministry of Sports and Youths Development). (2021). *National youth survey, 2020*. Abuja: FMYSO in Collaboration with NBS.
- ILO (International Labor Organization). (2015). *Global employment trends for youth 2015: Scaling up investments in decent jobs for youth*. Geneva (Switzerland): International Labor Office.
- Lamidi, K. O., & Igbokwe, P. I. (2021). Social investment programmes in Nigeria: Impact and challenges. *African Journal of Social Work*, 11(1), 1-10.
- National Social Investment Programme. (2018). *Investing in our people: A brief on the national social investment programmes in Nigeria*. National Social Investment Office.
- NBS (National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria). (2018). *Labor force statistics—Volume I: Unemployment and underemployment report* (Q4 2017, and Q3, 2018).
- NBS (National Bureau of Statistics). (2019). *2019 poverty and inequality in Nigeria: Executive summary*. Retrieved from www.nbs.gov.ng
- NBS (National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria). (2021). *Labor force statistics. Unemployment and Underemployment Report* (Q4, 2020).
- Nwaobi, G. (2019). *The impact of N-power (training and empowerment) programme on the duration of youth unemployment in Nigeria*. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331025654>
- Ofo, D. (2016). *Federal government of Nigeria N-Power programme 2016 for young Nigerians*. Retrieved from <https://www.opportunitiesforafricans.com/federal-government-of-nigeria-n-power-programme-2016-for-young-nigerians/>

- Onah, R. C., & Olise, C. N. (2019). National social investment programme (NSIP) and sustainable poverty reduction in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 24(10), 20-31. doi:10.9790/0837-2410112031 Retrieved from www.iosrjournals.org
- Ogundele, O. J. K., Akingbade, W. A., & Akinlabi, H. B. (2012). Entrepreneurship training and education as strategic tools for poverty alleviation in Nigeria. *America International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 2, 148-156.
- Ogwola, I. R. (2022). N-Power programmes and socio-economic development of Nigeria: A study of N-Power programmes in Benue (2015-2020) (Being a dissertation presentation to the Post Graduate School Board in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Science degree (M.Sc.) in Political Science (Development Studies Option), Ignatus Ajuru University of Education Rumuolumeni Port Harcourt, 2018).