

Public Perception of the Availability and Accessibility of Government Sponsored Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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Abstract

In the last two decades or more, Nigeria has to grapple with many emerging social problems as a result of the increasing rate of poverty. Nigeria is currently the world capital of people living in extreme poverty and about six (6) people slide into the poverty line of \$1.90 per day. Ebonyi, being one of the poorest states in Nigeria is characterized by lack of employment and social infrastructures. Though the Federal and Ebonyi State governments have over the years initiated and implemented some Poverty Alleviation Programmes (PAP) like the National Poverty Eradication Programme, N-Power, Community and Social Development Agency etc aimed at reducing the poverty level, poverty has continued to rise. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the public perception of the availability and accessibility of government-sponsored PAP in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. A participatory approach was used as its theoretical framework. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design with an in-depth interview as an instrument for data collection. Twenty-six respondents were purposively selected to constitute the sample size. Collected data were subjected to thematic analysis. Findings from the study revealed that accessing PAP was difficult because of the stringent conditions attached. The result also indicated that lack of proper coordination of the programmes, hijack by politicians and lack of adequate sensitization have made the people perceive PAP as ineffective in poverty reduction. The study recommended that both the social workers and the potential beneficiaries should be involved in the formulation and implementation of people-oriented PAP to address the issue of poverty.

Keywords: Community and Social Development Agency, N-Power, Poverty Alleviation Programmes, Poverty, Participatory Approach

Introduction

Globally, poverty is one of the most disturbing issues or challenges recently faced by humanity (Omoniyi, 2013). According to Peer (2020), about 9.2% representing 689 million people live in extreme poverty across the world and survive on less than \$1.90 a day. Similarly, about 803 million people live in multidimensional poverty and are undernourished. Thus, 476 million children are out-of-school, 1.2 billion people do not have access to clean cooking fuel, 687 million people do not have electricity, while 1.03 billion people live in substandard houses (United Nations Development Programme {UNDP}, 2020). Though the above figure represents global multidimensional poverty, about 84.3% of this multidimensional poor people

live in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia with a poverty rate of 558 million and 530 million respectively (UNDP, 2020). Even among the Sub-Saharan African countries, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Madagascar alone have almost half of the entire poor people in the region (World Bank, 2020). Specifically, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo alone currently contribute about one-quarter of the total poverty rate in Africa with about 170 million people in extreme poverty (Ventures Africa, 2019).

Data from the Brookings Institute revealed that Nigeria is currently the world capital of people living in extreme poverty, with projections that about 87 million Nigerians live in extreme poverty and about 6 people sliding into poverty per minute (Kharas, Hamel, & Hofer, 2018). In the same vein, Omoniyi (2018) states that about 100 million Nigerians are poor as they live below the world poverty line of \$1.90 per day. However, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2019) states that about 40.1% representing 82.9 million Nigerians live in poverty with 52.1% of the poor people living in rural areas, and 18% residing in urban areas. This means that 4 out of 10 Nigerians have real per capita expenditures of less than N137, 430 yearly. Also, NBS (2019) stated that 79.76% of Ebonyi people are poor. With the above statistics, Ebonyi emerged the fourth poorest state in Nigeria after Sokoto, Taraba, and Jigawa states that took first, second, and third positions with a poverty rate of 87.73%, 87.72%, and 87.02% respectively. The poverty status of Ebonyi State is evident in the lack of food, security, healthcare, employment, lack of shelter, low educational level, poor electricity supply, bad roads etc (Ani, 2020).

The concern over the increasing poverty level in the world especially in low-and middle-income countries and the need for its reduction as a means of improving the standard of living of the people has led to the conceptualization and implementation of various poverty reduction programmes (Oyesanmi, Eboiyehi, & Adereti, 2005). The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, 2006) sees poverty reduction as the efforts of national governments in reducing poverty levels through policy initiatives aimed at enhancing the participation of vulnerable groups in the economic and social development process. Poverty reduction refers to formal activities geared towards lowering the prevalence and rate of poverty and save humanity mainly through empowerment and education, thereby enabling them to take care of their own personal and family basic needs (Odalonu & Obani, 2018; Obiwuru, 2019).

The Nigerian government has over the years initiated and implemented several poverty reduction strategies aimed at reducing the sharp edge of poverty and improving the lives of her citizens. Some of the previous and present poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria include Farm Settlements Option 1960, National Accelerated Food Production Programme 1972, Agricultural Development Programme 1973, Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank 1975, Operation Feed the Nation 1976, Rural Banking Scheme 1977, Austerity Measures 1978, Green Revolution 1980, War Against Indiscipline 1983-1985, Nigerian Agricultural Land Development Authority 1985, Structural Adjustment Programme 1986, Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures 1986, Better Life Programme 1987, Peoples' Bank of Nigeria 1987, National Directorate of Employment 1988, National Economic Recovery Fund 1989, Community Banks 1990, Family Support Programme 1994, Petroleum Special Trust Fund 1995, Family Economic Advancement Programme 1997, Poverty Alleviation Programme 2000, National Poverty Eradication Programme 2001, National Economic Empowerment Development Strategies 2004, 7-Point Agenda, 2007, Subsidy Removal and Re-Investment Programme 2013, N-Power Programme 2016, Farmermoni, Tradermoni and Marketmoni 2018, National Youth Investment Fund, and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Survival Fund 2020. Others are Low-Cost Housing, River Basin Development Authority, Free and Compulsory Primary Education, Rural Electrification Scheme etc (Hassaini, 2014; Taiwo, & Agwu, 2016; Okah, Iyiani, & Aghedo, 2020).

Given the above efforts, and in a bid to show concern for poverty alleviation, Ebonyi State government since its inception in 1996 has initiated and implemented several programmes, policies and strategies. Some of such programmes include Free and Compulsory Primary and Secondary Education, Rural Electrification Projects, Rural Water Projects, Youth Empowerment through Neighborhood Watch, Scholarship Programmes, Family Succor and Upliftment Programme, Farmers' Empowerment Programme, Skills Acquisition Centres and Community and Social Development Agency.

However, even though significant efforts have been made in lifting people out of poverty especially in more developed nations of the world through these programmes, poverty level in most low-and middle-income countries like Nigeria has continued to rise (Okah, Iyiani, &

Aghedo, 2020). This means that despite these poverty reduction programmes, the poverty situation in Nigeria in general and Ebonyi State, in particular, is in the increase with more people falling below the poverty line daily. In Ebonyi State, there is practically lack of basic infrastructure and low level of income with most of the people dying of preventable diseases (Edeh, Udoikah, & Ugbala, 2017). This is because the poverty alleviation programmes meant to address the issue of poverty in Nigeria are faced with many challenges including poor programmes' implementation, corruption programmes being poorly targeted, and being imposed on the beneficiaries from above without their involvement (Babatunde, Olorunsanya, & Adejola, 2008; Omoniyi, 2013; Edeh, Udoikah, & Ugbala, 2017). Anwar (2017) stated that the poor management of poverty alleviation programmes has made it ineffective in ensuring poverty reduction and therefore, requires the partnership of professional social workers who are trained to help people meet their needs. This is because social workers play vital roles in policy formulation and have shown increased concern on poverty reduction as a result of their long history in working with the marginalized group (International Federation of Social Workers, 2010). Therefore, the poverty alleviation programmes and policies formulated by the government can be managed by social workers for better results (Rajendra, Venkat, & Channeveer, 2017).

Given the above, social workers are needed to assist in the formulation and implementation of people-oriented poverty alleviation programmes to address the issue of poverty and its devastating effects on the people, especially the rural dwellers. Through advocacy, social workers can influence the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes aimed at reducing poverty and improving the living conditions of the citizens. According to Zastrow (2004), one of the roles of social work is to always advocate for policies and programmes that address the provision of social services especially to the poor. Social workers should therefore liaise with policymakers in formulating favourable and friendly policies that will better the lots of the people. They are therefore expected to ensure that the welfare and living conditions of the people are improved upon through championing of policies that will provide them with social amenities and job opportunities to work towards alleviating the distress faced by the people. Also, social workers have major roles to play in providing public awareness, advocating for resources and education, community organization, planning and delivering peace and reconciliation programmes (Al-Qdah & Lacroix, 2011).

Participatory approach

The study adopted the participatory approach as its theoretical framework. The theory was propounded by Paulo Freire in 1970 and formally introduced in the development arena by Robert Chambers in 1980. Advanced in the works of Fiorino and Bowles (2001), participatory approach is a comprehensive and well-strategized activity requiring the involvement of the beneficiaries right from the beginning stage. At planning or project initiation, the people for which the project is planned for must be the drivers and part of the decision-making process, to help identify areas of felt needs. The participatory theory represents a move from the global, spatial, and top-down strategies that dominated early development initiatives to more locally sensitive methodologies (Claridge, 2004). The importance of participation grew out of the recognition that the world's poor have suffered as a result of development and that everyone needs to be involved in development decisions, implementations and benefits. Erring (2000) argued that the failure of the "top-down" approach to rural development necessitates "the participatory approach" to socio-economic development, and puts the last first as the poverty alleviation process. The assumption is that participation of stakeholders will cause decision-making processes to be more inclusive and therefore, instigate ownership over development processes, which in turn, leads to more sustainable impacts (Chambers, 1983). Therefore, the government's poverty alleviation programmes and policies should make provisions for inclusions of the prospective beneficiaries of the projects from conception, designing and implementation stages so that their views will be considered. This will aid project effectiveness, utilization and sustainability.

The theory can be used in identifying needs, planning, monitoring or evaluating projects and programmes such as poverty alleviation programmes. As a consultation tool, it offers the opportunity to go beyond mere consultation and promote the active participation of communities in the issues and interventions that shape their lives. The employment of participatory approaches in development projects has been a required element of project design for many donor organizations over the years (Thomas, & Van de Fliert, 2014). Despite the importance of the theory in the programme's implementation and poverty reduction, it has been criticized for placing unrealistic demands on people, with more pressing demands on their time. It has also been criticized for lack of better development impacts (Cooker, & Kothari, 2001).

Materials and Methods

The study was carried out in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. According to the National Population Commission (NPC, 2006), Ebonyi State has a population of 2, 173, 501 people with the majority of this population living in rural areas. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design with an in-depth interview as an instrument for data collection. The study equally adopted a purposive sampling method in the selection of 26 respondents to constitute the sample size. One community was selected from each of the 13 local government areas in the state. The selected communities are Umuezeokoha, Ikwuato-Idembia, Ndufu-Alike, Ezillo, Izhia/Ezzamgbo, Igbagu, Ishieke, Nkaleke-Echara, Okposhi-Okwu, Oshiri, Amaeze-Ishiagu, Amasiri, and Owutu-Edda. From the selected communities, 2 respondents were further selected and interviewed for the study. The selected respondents were the representatives of youths, town union presidents, opinion leaders and women leaders in their respective local governments. The rationale behind the choice of purposive sampling method was because of the key positions of the selected respondents in their respective communities, their knowledge of PAP and willingness to share such information with the researchers. The interviews took place at homes and offices of the respondents with each interview lasting about 30 to 40 minutes. The respondents were between the ages of 18 and above. Informed consent forms were obtained from the respondents before conducting the interviews; while observing COVID-19 protocol of 2 meters gap. The field exercise took place between August and September 2020. Data collected were transcribed, edited and analysed through themes, phrases and direct quotes and used for the study.

Findings and results

Availability of poverty alleviation programmes

Majority of the respondents attested that there are poverty alleviation strategies in Ebonyi State. In particular, one of the respondents had this to say:

My brother, all I can tell you is that the government is trying in terms of poverty alleviation initiatives in the state. Apart from the federal government's poverty alleviation programmes that are existent in the state like the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), N-Power and the World Bank Assisted Community and Social Development Agency (CSDA) etc, the state government also has in place many other poverty alleviation policies and programmes aimed at reducing the poverty level in the state (*Female IDI, Umuezeokoha*).

Another respondent phrased:

Ebonyi State government has been trying to reduce the poverty level and improve for the better the living conditions of her citizens through numerous programmes and policies. Some of such programmes include the CSDA, which has been instrumental to many development projects in the state. Others are free and compulsory primary and secondary education, farmers' empowerment through soft loans, local and overseas scholarship programmes, rural roads construction, rural electrification projects, and soft loans to civil servants for business and farming purposes to augment their monthly salaries (*Male IDI, Amasiri*).

Accessibility of poverty alleviation programmes

Though available evidence from the respondents showed that poverty alleviation programmes abound in Ebonyi State as stated above. However, the accessibility and utilization of such programmes were said to be difficult and problematic. Some of the respondents reported that many people in Ebonyi State have not been able to access or benefit from any of the available poverty alleviation programmes because of one reason or the other. As a result of the stringent conditions attached to some of these programmes, many poor people have not been able to meet up with such conditions. For example, it was learnt that CSDA requires a counterpart fund of about 10-20% from the applying groups, societies or communities to qualify them for application. This counterpart fund according to the respondents does not guarantee that the application and project will be approved. A female respondent quizzed:

My dear, I can tell you that irrespective of these poverty measures, more than 95% of my people have not benefited from any of the numerous poverty alleviation programmes of the state government. To me, it seems the programmes are just meant for some people alone while excluding the others that have nobody in the government (*Female IDI, Amaeze-Ishiagu*).

However, a respondent with a dissenting view said:

Ebonyi State poverty alleviation programmes are there to be accessed by every Ebonyian. He continued, in my community alone, many people have benefited through N-Power, NAPEP, scholarship programmes, and loans for business and agricultural purposes (*Male IDI, Okposhi-Okwu*).

In lending his voice, another respondent had this to say:

My community (Umuezeokoha) has accessed many times the poverty alleviation programmes of the state government. In particular, the Ebonyi State government through CSDA has built a town hall for Umuezeokoha Youth Association (UYA), built lock-up shops at Ohagolode village, and is currently building other lock-up shops at Eke Umuezeokoha market

through the State/Local Government Joint Poverty Alleviation Programme (SLGJPAP) to the glory of God and benefit of the people (*Male IDI, Umuezeokoha*).

Yet another respondent noted:

Many people including myself have accessed and benefited from the government's poverty alleviation programmes especially through the N-Power. That one favoured many of our youths (*Male IDI, Ezillo*).

Impacts of poverty alleviation programmes

Some of the respondents stated that poverty alleviation programmes have impacted them positively especially in areas of rural infrastructure and amenities like electricity, boreholes, health centres, school buildings and unemployment benefits (N-Power). Below is a quote from a respondent:

We were able to complete our town hall building through the assistance of the state's poverty alleviation efforts and the hall now serves our people in various ways. For example, during the last local government election in August 2020, the hall served as our polling unit. Our community also uses the hall for meetings and many others have used it for wedding and other ceremonies (*Male IDI, Izhia/Ezzamgbo*).

Still on the impacts of poverty alleviation programmes in affirming its impacts puts it this way:

I graduated from Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki since 2010 and could not get a job for over 6 years. I could not start a small-scale business because of lack of fund. It was in 2016 that I was enlisted into the Batch A N-Power programme and was placed on a monthly stipend of N30,000. The money paid to me through N-Power has helped me to set up a small business and saw me through my M.Sc. programme (*Female IDI, Nkaleke-Echara*).

Another respondent also says:

I know of a friend that was given a loan of N500, 000 through the state government-civil servant loan scheme. He invested the money in farming and he is now doing better (*Male IDI, Igbagu*).

Similarly, another respondent cheerfully says:

My neighbouring community now enjoys a steady electricity supply because of the assistance of the poverty alleviation programme in the state. In addition, 2 of my siblings who benefited from the N-Power programme of the federal government are now doing well in their small-scale businesses (*Male IDI, Ndufu-Alike*).

Challenges of poverty alleviation programmes

Our interviews with the respondents revealed that despite the availability, accessibility and impacts of the government-sponsored poverty alleviation programmes on the lives of the beneficiaries in Ebonyi State, several challenges were said to be affecting the effectiveness and smooth operations of the programmes. According to a respondent, many problems are facing these programmes. He said:

Lack of proper coordination of the programmes by the government, difficulties accessing the programmes, projects being hijacked by politicians, lack of sensitization about the programmes and how to access them, lack of fund, corruption, and lack of genuine beneficiaries etc. affect the potency and effectiveness of these programmes in poverty reduction (*Male IDI, Amasiri*).

Perceived effectiveness of poverty alleviation programmes

There were mixed reactions to how the respondents perceived the poverty alleviation programmes. While some perceived them as being effective, the majority of the respondents saw the programmes as being ineffective in poverty reduction considering their scope of coverage and the current poverty level in the state. A respondent stated:

My brother, all I can tell you is that there is poverty in this state. Just look around you and see for yourself. You are from this state, you should know better. Poverty alleviation programmes are trying, but the poverty level of the state is far beyond poverty reduction initiatives. Look at me, I am a graduate, yet no job for a good 5 years now. Let me tell you, both the present federal and state poverty alleviation programmes are useless on the face of the state's poverty level. They are just a scratch in the surface of poverty here, simple (*Male IDI, Oshiri*).

Another respondent said:

The government's poverty alleviation programmes are trying but the level of poverty here is bigger than the current programmes meant to tame it. Many individuals, groups, and communities that applied for these programmes did not succeed, probably because of the scope of the programme. In all, more than 90% of those that applied for one form of poverty alleviation programme or another did not get it. You see, you cannot say they are effective when the majority of the people are yet to feel their impacts despite several attempts (*Male IDI, Nkaliki-Echara*).

Another respondent reported:

You cannot say they are effective when the rate of poverty and unemployment is in the increase. In fact, forget what you see in the

state capital here, just go to the rural areas where the majority of the people live and see things for yourself. Poverty is ravaging the lives of the people (*Male IDI, Ikwuato-Idembia*).

Ways to make the programmes more effective

We asked to find out ways in which the programmes could become more effective in poverty reduction and improve the living conditions of the people. One of the respondents tried to suggest ways by saying:

I think the government should put in more efforts to ensure that more people are accommodated into its various programmes. Also, there is no sense in recruiting unemployed people especially the youth in the name of empowerment, pay them for a stipulated period and disengage them without giving them something to fall back on, thereby throwing them back to the labour market and consequently, poverty (like N-power) (*Male IDI, Ishieke*).

Another stated:

There should be sensitization to enable the people to continue to give the programmes a shot. Out of experience, many still believe that the handlers of the programmes always skew it to benefit their people (*Male IDI, Owutu-Edda*).

Another respondent noted:

The government should monitor the programmes for effectiveness. There should also be proper coordination of projects to ensure that the target or genuine beneficiaries are reached. The government should also ensure full implementation of projects and ensure that the people such projects are meant for are involved while conceiving and implementing the programmes (*Male IDI, Ishieke*).

Another respondent who happened to be a social worker suggested the inclusion of social workers in programmes' planning and implementation. She said:

To ensure that the programmes are effective, the potential beneficiaries should be put first and social workers should be involved in all stages of the programmes meant to alleviate poverty (*Female IDI, Ezillo*).

Discussion

Indications show that there are government' efforts to the alleviating of the poverty rate in Ebonyi State. Responses from the majority of the respondents revealed that there is a presence of federal, state and local government poverty alleviation programmes in the area. The study found

that apart from NDE, NAPEP etc that are federal government-sponsored programmes, the state government has also put in place its programmes like the free and compulsory primary and secondary education, local and overseas scholarship programmes, and the World Bank assisted Community and Social Development Agency etc. These programmes are meant to aid the federal government's initiatives in reducing the poverty level in Ebonyi State.

The study equally shows that despite the availability of poverty alleviation programmes in the study area, accessing them was difficult because of the conditions attached to some of them. The respondents stated that as a result of these stringent conditions, the majority of the people in the state have not been able to access or benefit from the programmes. Specifically, they stated that some of the poverty alleviation programmes like CSDA require a counterpart fund of about 10-20% from applicants before considerations. Of course, many people do not have such fund to pay as counterpart fund. It is therefore observed that many people whom the programmes are supposedly meant for were yet to access them. As a result, most respondents expressed feelings of dissatisfaction as the majority of those that accessed or benefited were those that had political affiliation or godfathers in the ruling political party (Damilola, 2013).

On the impacts of the programmes in their lives, most of the respondents stated that the programmes in the state have impacted them positively especially those who have benefited directly or indirectly. Some of them said their respective communities were able to complete their communal projects through the assistance of these programmes in the state. According to them, the completed projects now serve them individually and collectively in their various communities. Many others have also seen their living conditions improved and changed for better through the poverty alleviation programmes like the N-Power. The study revealed that the programme has impacted positively on the beneficiaries, especially in the areas of job creation, improvement in income, improvement in raising the respondents' level of education, improvement in social status, etc (Hussaini, 2014). This is in line with the work of Anya (2017), which stated that poverty alleviation programmes like NAPEP have benefited many people through employment creation, Keke-NAPEP, Otta farm training programme, tailoring and fashion and designing equipment, as well as loan/grants to farmers.

One of the major findings of the study was that irrespective of their impacts on the lives of the people, these programmes still faced a legion of challenges. The respondents stated that lack of proper coordination of the programmes by the government, difficulties in accessing the programmes, politicians hijacking the programmes, lack of adequate sensitization about the programmes and how to access them, corruption, programme discontinuity, lack of funds, and lack of genuine beneficiaries etc affect the potency and operations of the programmes. Therefore, instead of reducing the incidence of poverty, which is their sole aim, these programmes tend to serve as means for draining the national resources due to the pursuit of parochial interests, as a result of fostering corruption, dishonesty, mismanagement, imitation of other country's programmes, political interference, lack of funding etc (Taiwo & Agwu, 2016; Odalonu & Obani, 2018; Obiwuru, 2019).

There were mixed reactions to the respondents' views of poverty alleviation programmes in the state. Majority of the respondents indicated that the programmes are ineffective in poverty reduction owing to the prevalence of poverty and unemployment in the state. Though the programmes have impacted them positively, it does not transform to effectiveness because many people are yet to benefit from the programmes and the poverty level they seek to reduce is rather on the increase. Several poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria, initiated by both the Government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), aimed at combating and alleviating poverty are not successful as they are considered ineffective in poverty reduction (Taiwo & Agwu, 2016; Okah, Iyiani & Aghedo, 2020). This means that despite these poverty reduction programmes, the poverty situation in Nigeria in general and Ebonyi State, in particular, is in the increase with more people falling below the poverty line daily.

On how to make the programmes better and more effective, they suggested that governments and non-governmental organizations should put in more efforts to ensure that more people are accommodated into the various poverty reduction programmes. They should map out more funds and monitor the programmes for expected results. The findings also revealed that the programmes should be well coordinated to ensure that genuine beneficiaries are reached. This could be done by involving the potential beneficiaries in the conception and execution of programmes and projects. They equally suggested that social workers should be involved in all

stages of the programmes meant to alleviate poverty and sufferings of the people. The programmes should be re-examined and possibly re-designed for effective performance (Anyabe, 2015). The government should as well, create industries and revive the existing poverty alleviation programmes to boost the economy and create job opportunity for the youths; and channel proper allocation of funds into various poverty alleviation programmes of the government to ensure vibrancy and continuity (Odalonu & Obani, 2018). Poverty reduction should also ensure investment by rural communities in agriculture, education, healthcare, electricity, functional feeder roads, distribution of goods and services, investment in human capital and skills acquisition and training for available job opportunities (Edeh, Udoikah and Ugbala (2017).

Conclusion and recommendations

This study investigated the availability and accessibility level of government-sponsored poverty alleviation programmes in Ebonyi State. Findings revealed that while several poverty alleviation programmes exist in the state and have made giant efforts in tackling poverty in the state, the poverty level has continued to rise in the study area. This is evident in the recent report by the National Bureau of Statistics that named Ebonyi as the 4th poorest state in Nigeria. Also, the poverty level in the state is still massive and glaring as manifested in the lack of adequate amenities needed for quality living such as roads, healthcare, electricity, unemployment and hunger. Given the above, the study recommends that government should create more jobs for the teeming jobless youths or make the life span of poverty alleviation programmes like N-Power last longer pending when the beneficiaries will get permanent jobs. The government should involve the potential beneficiaries or their representatives in the planning and execution of projects to ensure that genuine beneficiaries are selected because they know the real poor. The scope of all poverty alleviation related programmes should be widened to allow for more coverage and must be targeted mostly at those in the rural areas. Finally, social workers should be involved in programmes conception, designing and implementation to ensure that the interest of the people is well-protected. They should also be part of the sensitization efforts towards educating the people on the importance of poverty alleviation programmes.

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Authors' Profiles

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