



FADAMA III NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN BENUE STATE

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ABSTRACT

The work examines Fadama III National Development Project and its impact on poverty reduction in Benue State. While the study focuses on the period 2008-2013, when the project was initiated and completed, the impact assessment has been extended to cover post-implementation period in order to ascertain the sustainability and credibility of the project. Using the state centric and good governance approach, the work discovers that FADAMA III which is World Bank project that was implemented in partnership with the Federal, State and Local Governments in Nigeria, recorded some positive achievements in income of farmers, physical infrastructure and productive assets in the participating communities, the impacts of poverty reduction were unsustainable and unimpressive. The income of participants during the implementation period especially during the first year, did not translate to poverty reduction as majority of the people continue to wallow in abject poverty in Benue State. This is attributed to bad government and state's failure which manifests in sustained corruption and lack of leadership commitment to rural and general welfare of the citizenry. The work therefore, recommends that people should be made the means and ends of any development programme. This calls for a sustainable vision plan, creativity and initiative that can position the people to create wealth, food and jobs while the government provides an enabling environment.

Keyword: Fadama, Poverty Reduction, the State, Good Governance.

INTRODUCTION

The deteriorating human development indices is a fundamental challenge of governance among Third World Countries (TWCs) including Nigeria; a fact which is incontestable. Though some countries in Africa such as South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt etc, have experienced some levels of macro-economic growth, the continent remains with many of the world's poorest countries in the 21st century (World Bank, 2018). Findings by the World Poverty Clock, compiled by Brookings Institute, show that more than 643 million people across the world live in extreme poverty, with Africans accounting for about two-thirds of the total number (CNN, June 28, 2018). Details of the World Poverty Clock report further shows that Nigeria has overtaken India as the country with the most extreme poor people in the world with about 86.9 million Nigerians living in extreme poverty which represents nearly 50% of its estimated 180 million populations. The socio-economic and material well-being of the majority of the Nigerian population is generally poor as the country is ranked 152 of 188 countries in human development index on the basis of life expectancy, education, and per capita income (Premium Times, April 19, 2018). Though poverty has a global character, statistics about human development index in Nigeria are not only worrisome but also indicate worsening socio-economic fundamentals which compound and reinforced poverty in the country. Paradoxically, Nigeria is enormously endowed with human and material resources, yet the country assumes the status of global



poverty capital, with increasing high rate of unemployment, high rate of out-school children, massive infrastructure deficit, poor economic indices, and worsening economic and material well-being of generality of the population. In fact, the country falls short of meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) now Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target for reduction of poverty. While poverty situation in Benue state could be understood in the wider scope of human development crisis in Nigeria, the State is ranked among the worst in terms of poverty profile in the country. The paradox is that the enormous potentials of Benue state in the areas of agriculture, culture, tourism, sports, human capital, trade, and so on, have strategically placed the state far and above many states in Nigeria. However, Benue State is known to occupied 8th position among the poorest states in Nigeria; and poverty in Benue State is absolute, severe, widespread, and multi-dimensional and it continues to worsen (Ikwuba, 2011).

The phenomenon of poverty in Nigeria and Benue state in particular is a serious governance challenge and it constitutes a major threat to security, socio-economic and human development. Obviously, Nigeria, like many other poverty-ridden countries is not bereft of poverty reduction programmes; however, without corresponding impact. Successive governments in Nigeria have committed enormous human and material resources to reduce poverty with the support of richer nations, donor agencies, community based organizations, development partners, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), with no desirable impact on the poor. Some of the intervention measures instituted by successive governments in forms of programmes, policies, projects, and institutions to reduce poverty in include Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative Bank (NACB) later renamed Nigerian Agricultural Co-operative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB) and now Bank of Agriculture (BOI), Peoples Bank of Nigeria (PBN) later merged with NACRDB, Family Economic Advancement programme (FEAP), River Basin Authorities, Operations Feed the Nation, Universal Basic Education (UBE), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), Green Revolution, Low Cost Housing Scheme and Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Others are National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) which was later replaced with National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Community Banking system (CBs) now Microfinance Banks (MFBs), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), Local Environmental Empowerment and Management Programme (LEEMP) now Community and Social Development Programme (CSDP), Subsidy Re-investment and Empowerment Programme (Sure-P), and presently, the Social Investment Programme of Buhari administration, and so on. The above highlighted intervention measures emphasised growth, basic needs, and rural development approaches. Since poverty in Nigeria is predominantly a rural phenomenon, most of these strategies are basically designed to provide access to production inputs and credits in order to boost economic activities in the rural areas where the poorest resides. However, a study on the subject of poverty and agencies concerned with its reduction in Nigeria indicates that considerable gap exists between the target objective of poverty reduction and achievement (Aliyu, 2001). Causes of poverty and factors associated with the failure of poverty reduction programmes in



Nigeria as identified by Ajakaiye (2002), Igbuzor (2008), can be summarised as socio-economic and infrastructure deficit, structural and policy deficiencies, poor governance and the dearth of visionary and development-minded leadership in Nigeria. Notable among the plethora of poverty reduction programmes instituted in Benue state is the Fadama III National Development Project. Fadama III project in Benue State was implemented in 20 out of the 23 Local Government Areas in Benue State between 2009 and 2013. According to Compendium of FADAMA III Project Activities in Benue State 2009 – 2013 prepared by Benue State Agricultural Development Authority (BNARDA) in conjunction with The World Bank (2014), FADAMA III project development objective is to sustainably increase incomes of FADAMA User. By increasing their incomes, the project will help reduce rural poverty, increase food security and contribute to the achievement of a key Millennium Development Goal (MDGs), and now Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The problematic of this study like many others on the subject matter of poverty therefore, is to interrogate how and why poverty reduction programmes have not and are not working for the country with particular interest in the implementation of Fadama III project in Benue State of Nigeria.

The Concept of Poverty

Scholarly works have made the concept of poverty more complex, particularly as a result of the proliferation of analytical and theoretical perspectives concerning the meaning, determinants, manifestations and causes of poverty. Thus, conceptualising poverty in the context of this background becomes a herculean task; and because poverty is multi-dimensional, an exercise of this nature is too limited to review a plethora of literature about what actually constitutes poverty. That notwithstanding, the task here is to briefly consider some views that are relevant in the context of this paper. National Bureau of Statistics (2010) conceptualised poverty in terms of absolute, relative and dollar per day. Absolute poverty deals with lack of basic needs such as food, shelter and healthcare; while relative poverty is measured in terms of per capital expenditure and per capita expenditures that are less than two-thirds of the poverty line are considered to be poor, while those above are non-poor. On the other hand, dollar per day approach sets poverty at US\$2 a day or less and extreme poverty at US\$1.25. NBS (2010) exposition implies that a state or country is said to be poor when majority of its citizens lack access to basic needs and they live below poverty line which is basically determine by their level of income and expenditure. This perspective describes poverty in terms of insufficient income for securing basic goods and services, while others conceived it as a multi-dimensional concept that deals with the function of education, health, life expectancy and child mortality. When viewed in the context of development of productive forces and social relations of production, poverty implies the ability of an individual to subsist and reproduce as well as the ability to command resources to achieve subsistence. Therefore, rather than bored you with definitions, this paper adopts conceptualisation of poverty by Copenhagen Declaration of 1995 which states that, poverty has many manifestations which include lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increase mortality and mortality from illness; homelessness and



inadequate housing; unsafe environment; social discrimination and exclusion; lack of political participation in decision making and in civil, social and cultural life (Alimeka, 2001, p.3).

Theoretical Analysis

In attempts to address the problems of underdevelopment and poverty, the Nigerian state has established a long standing partnership with the advanced countries and the international organizations such as The World Bank, International Monetary Fund, The United Nations, UNICEF, and so on, yet these problems remained unresolved. The World Bank, which is the focus of this paper, is one of the major international financial institutions and major sources of lending for developing countries. The World Bank intervention in economic development of Nigeria predates her political independence when in 1958, the bank extended its first loan of \$28.0 million to Nigeria for the construction of the Bauchi – Maiduguri railway in the North – Eastern part of the country (Olinger (1977). However, until recently, the World Bank was reluctant to provide loan for the development of agriculture in Nigeria and other parts of the Third World.

The World Bank, which is one of the largest sources of assistance for the world's 78 poorest countries, 39 of which are in Africa, has introduced Fadama Project to reduce poverty by providing interest free credits and grants for programmes that boost economic growth, reduce inequalities and improve people's living conditions (The World Bank, 2009). However, like several other World Bank projects, the Nigerian government has not demonstrated enough capacity and political will to manage and provide favourable environment for the implementation of Fadama project. Though Fadama III project in Benue state has recorded some successes especially during the implementation period, the general performance of the programme was unimpressive particularly with regard to poverty reduction. The problem is not necessarily with the programme but largely due to poor implementation framework and bad governance. Thus, it is not enough to viewed Fadama III project as an attempt by the international capitalist institutions to further integrate the Nigeria agriculture into global capitalist system with dire consequences on Nigerians whose livelihood depend on agriculture. The point been that, though the argument of dependency school of thought may be appealing to traced the failure of international financial assistance in Nigeria to the dynamics of international capitalist system, the experiences of some countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia etc that took advantage of foreign capital to develop their economies has rendered ineffective the argument of dependency scholars especially in the context of the implementation of Fadama III project in Benue state. It is against this background that, the state centric and good governance approach becomes suitable for explaining the low performance of Fadama III project in relation to poverty reduction in Benue state. This approach considers the role of state and good governance as central to the development of any country. Though, the private sector is the engine of economic growth and development of advanced capitalist countries, the state has a pivotal role to create an enabling environment for the private sector to drive industrialization and economic development. In this sense, the nature and character of the Nigerian state is central to understanding the problem of



underdevelopment and poverty in the country. From the Marxist political economy perspective, the state is seen as an instrument for maintaining order in which the interest of the ruling class is protected in the long run. Marx describes the state as the executive of the modern state and a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie, hence an instrument in the hands of the ruling class. According to Ake (2002) one cannot understand development strategies and policies, let alone the possibility of development without referring constantly to the nature and dynamics of the social forces in which it is embedded. Instead of being a public force, the state in Africa tends to be privatised, that is, appropriated to the service of private interests by the dominant faction of the elite. Thus, the state is mostly seen as instrument of primitive accumulation which tends to promote corruption that is a major obstacle to development and poverty reduction. The foregoing theoretical insight indicates that there exist two dominant and antagonistic views regarding the failure of development in Africa and Nigeria in particular. While one school of thought traced the problem to the colonial experience as well as the contemporary relationship of exploitation between Africa and advanced capitalist world based on the dynamics of the international capitalist system, the other school attributes the problem to internal dynamics of the African countries including Nigeria. The question now is where to place the role of state and good governance which is responsible for the success stories of countries which shared the same historical experience with Africa outside the intellectual confrontation of these schools of thought.

An Overview of Fadama III Project in Benue State

The concept of Fadama, according to Kudi et al., (2008), is an age-old tradition in Hausa land where lands that floods on seasonal basis are used to grow variety of crops under small scale irrigation farming system. These lands are noted for high fertility given the rich alluvial soil in abundance within the catchment areas. Simply put, Fadama is a low-laying water logged area mostly characterized by fine alluvial or clay soil, suitable for irrigated crop production during the dry seasons or drought periods. Most of these lands are found in the Northern states for example, 3.144 million hectares of this land is distributed in Northern and central geographical zones of Nigeria (Ume, 2011). Therefore, Fadama project, a brainchild of the World Bank, was introduced in order to utilise the abundant agriculture potentials in Nigeria. This initiative was based on the Vietnam experience and it is aimed at addressing the problems of food crisis, rural poverty and low income in Nigeria. The Nigerian experience has shown that Fadama project was carried out in three (3) phases. The First National Fadama Development Project in Nigeria known as Fadama I was implemented during the period of 1993 to 1999; and it operated in 25 States of the federation including FCT (World Bank, 2008). Within this period, the project experienced some challenges which to some extent overwhelmed its positive impacts. The Second National Fadama Development Project known as Fadama II was introduced and implemented from the period of 2004 to 2010 with support and encouragement from the World Bank and the African Development Bank (ADB). Among the 18 States that participated in the Fadama II project, the World Bank and the African Development Bank supported 12 and 6 States respectively. Benue State did not participate in Fadama II due to the State Government untidy approach to implementation



issues. The Third National Fadama Development Project otherwise known as Fadama III project was introduced as a follow-up to the previous one; and it lasted from 2009 to 2013. Initially, only 18 States were covered and it was later expanded to all the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Though the first FADAMA project started in 1992, the introduction of FADAMA III as improvement over FADAMA I and II, was tandem with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set out by leaders of 189 countries at the UN Summit in September 2000. The UN Millennium Declaration set out eight (8) measurable goals to be achieved by the year 2015. One basic goal is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger which has not been realised due to lack of commitment and the character of governance of individual countries especially among the TWCs including Nigeria. With the expiration of MDGs in 2015, comes the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro which birthed a new set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for a global development framework beyond 2015. Like the MDGs, the 17 SDGs placed poverty reduction at the front burner of its targets. However, with about ten (10) years left, there is no convincing evidence that SDGs are realisable in many countries including Nigeria particularly with regards to poverty eradication. As key component of MDGs and now SDGs, FADAMA III is agriculture and economic empowerment programme that was implemented in Benue State over a five (5) year period from July 2009 to June, 2013, and closed on 31st December, 2013 ((BNARDA, 2014). The main objective of FADAMA III project was to increase the income of users of rural land and water resources on a sustainable basis by empowering the registered FADAMA Community Association/FADAMA User Groups to take charge of their development agenda through Community Driven Development approach (CDD) in its implementation. It shows that Fadama III basically targets empowerment of rural communities with farmers as major beneficiaries by boosting agriculture productivity and increased income of the rural communities especially women and the vulnerable group. However, the Fadama initiators of the project wrongly assumed that enhanced agriculture productivity is tantamount to poverty reduction on a sustainable basis. Though agriculture development is central to addressing the problem of rural poverty in Nigeria and Benue State in particular, addressing the complexity and vicious circle of rural poverty requires a broader and holistic approach. Fadama III as implemented in Benue state is a tripartite funded intervention that involves the World Bank, the Federal Government of Nigeria and participating States. The funding arrangement was for the World Bank to contribute 55.6%, Federal Government of Nigeria 5.1%, and participating States and Local Governments 17.1% and 8.9% respectively. It shows that as at August, 2013, the World Bank had provided the sum of \$200m US Dollars for Nigeria Fadama III project (World Bank 2013). The Federal Government of Nigeria had in 2007 borrowed the sum of \$250 from the International Development Agency (IDA) to finance the cost of the Fadama III (FMFED, 2007). To achieve the purpose of Fadama III project in Benue State, some actions were carried out which are contained in the Implementation Document of the Benue State Coordination Office (2014). A number of strategic choices were built into the design of Fadama III project to increase agricultural productivity. The implementation of Fadama III in Benue State was through CDD approach which provided a framework for community organisations on how the resources



will be allocated among the priorities that they themselves identify and they will manage the funds. As noted earlier, the project was implemented in 20 out of 23 Local Government Areas of the state under six (6) components. These include capacity building; local government and communication support; small scale community owned infrastructure; advisory services and inputs support; support to ADPs sponsored research and on farm demonstration; asset acquisition for individual FUGs/EIGs and project management, monitoring and evaluation.

According to report by BNARDA (2014), a total of 192 FADAMA Community Associations (FCAs) and 2727 FADAMA User Groups (FUGs) registered to participate in the programme. Also, a total of 188 No Local Development Plans (LDPs) were prepared, screened and approved for the implementation, out of which 152 No were funded. The report further indicates that the total number of sub-projects prepared and approved was 2444 out of which 2009 out of the sub-projects were fully implemented. In the area of capacity building, all the 152 funded FADAMA Community Associations and 1857 FADAMA User Groups across the state were trained with a total membership of 41, 370 persons in attendance. In the area of finance, the state FADAMA Coordination Office disbursed the sum of N703,651,745.00 (Seven Hundred and Three Million, Six Hundred and Fifty One Thousand, Seven Hundred and Forty Five Naira) only to the 152 FCAs and 1857 FUGs to carry out their various sub-project activities (BNARDA, 2014). On the performance of FADAMA III in the Benue State, the State Coordinating Office reports that increase in income generation among beneficiaries rose from N32, 984.00 to N188, 032.50 as at mid-term due to Fadama III project intervention. Also, a total of 1034 No land titles were recorded and implemented in various types. The Fadama federation was able to save the sum of N25, 000,000.00 under their FUET for sustainability of sub-projects. A total of 1656 sub-projects were geo-reference across the state. A total of 33 rural roads were rehabilitated covering 145km with 11 No bridges and 41 No box culverts constructed. The project also constructed 243 No market stores and 13 No warehouses. In the area of effective project implementation, the Sate Coordination Office held 46 No facilitators forum to review progress report as well as constraints and challenges affecting implementation of the project. In the same vein, the State Fadama Coordination Office held 46 No management meetings to ensure effective implementation of the project activities. Report by the Benue State Fadama Coordination Office further reveals that the State Government paid a total of N65, 000,000.00 for 2009 and part payment for 2010 counterpart funds leaving an outstanding balance of N217, 000,000.00 for 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 which were all approved. Also, the 20 participating Local Government Areas were able to pay the sum of N120, 000.000.00 as counterpart for 2009, 2010 and 2011 with an outstanding balance of N80, 000,000.00 for 2012 and 2013. Though the project was extended to 2017, there are no available records to show that the state government had paid the outstanding balance to enable the remaining communities benefit from the programme. By way of analysis, the implementation report put forward by the State Coordination Office only narrowed its performance assessment on income of the beneficiaries without specifically relating to how Fadama III project has impacted on agriculture productivity viz-a-viz on poverty reduction in Benue State. In terms of



accountability, since Fadama III project has a tripartite funding arrangement, it is expected that the report would clearly indicate how much each stakeholder - the World Bank, Federal, State and Local Governments has invested and the actual amount spent for the project.

Poverty Threats in Benue State

Poverty profile in Benue state like elsewhere could be understood in the general context of the development of productive forces and social relations of production. It implies the level of human and societal development. Obviously, a study of this nature especially with regards to poverty profile in Benue state is problematic on account of the issues, manifestations, causes and threats associated with the phenomenon. Inarguably, available statistics such as BENSEEDS (2004), NBS (2011), etc, do not contradict the reality that Benue state is poor and indeed, it is one of the poorest in Nigeria. However, isolating causes, manifestations and consequences of poverty from each other is not an easy exercise. This does not suggest that the causes, manifestations and consequences of poverty are not known; the argument is that the manifestations and consequences of poverty further compound and reinforced the problem and indeed constitutes threat to security, human and socio-economic development of the State. Meanwhile, analysing the dynamics of poverty and indeed, measuring poverty profile in Benue state in accordance with the available socio-economic indicators requires wider scope than this paper. The focus here is on some of the threats that associate with the poverty in Benue state. While Benue state occupies 8th position among the poorest States in Nigeria as earlier stated, a prominent feature of poverty in Benue state is that it is basically a rural phenomenon where more than 80% of the population lives with agriculture as main economic activity (Benue State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (BENSEEDS), 2004). This to some extent explains why agriculture is usually a major component of rural development programmes in Nigeria and Benue state in particular. The poverty situation in Benue state constitutes a threat to rural development and agriculture productivity especially that the greater percentage of the working population is engaged in agriculture which is not rewarding. When viewed from the political economy perspective, the underdevelopment of the rural economy and endemic poverty in Benue state reinforces the problem of low level of the development of productive forces. As long as majority of the people lacked the productive capacity to contribute to the economy of the State, poverty threats will continue affect the development of Benue state.

Apart from contributing to the state of underdevelopment of rural economy, poverty generates conditions for rural – urban migration and indeed, the rise of urbanization in Nigeria. This is noted in the movement of Benue people especially the productive age from the rural areas to urban centre because of the desire to obtain jobs and better their living. Rural - urban migration has also led to shortage of both skilled and unskilled labour in the rural area. More so, while some of these people are engaged in useful ventures, majority of them rather constitutes nuisance and threat to security of the state. In another dimension, the nexus between poverty and security has been extensively examined by several scholars such as Osunyikanmi (2014), Adebajoko and Walter (2014),



and Umaru, et al (2015), among others. The essence is to demonstrate how poverty is serious security threat in Nigeria. It shows that poverty in Nigeria is more pronounced in conflict-prone areas while insecurity is rife in poverty-stricken areas which generate the question of the relationship between poverty and insecurity as well as their implications for development. This explains why the highest poverty rates are recorded in the North-West and North-East geopolitical zones with a poverty rate of 77.7% and 76.6% respectively (NBS, 2012). This development points to the reality of excruciating poverty situation in Benue state which breeds atmosphere of insecurity in the state. It is philosophical that individuals and groups respond differently in the face of challenges depending on situational factor and capacity; and in this case, these responses are crystallized and find expression in various shades of insecurity and antisocial behaviours including armed robbery, kidnapping, and insurgency, among others. The ultimate threat of poverty its consequences for socio-economic development of any society. It means that the worsening poverty situation in Benue state portends grave implications for the socio-economic development of the state. Indeed, poverty is one of the major yardsticks for measuring development of any society. Adam Smith (1776) captures this reality in his submission that “no society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which by far the greater part of the numbers are miserable”. On the other hand, the worsening poverty profile in Benue state is reinforced by faulty development plans which in turn negatively impact on socio-economic development of the State.

Fadama III and Poverty Reduction in Benue State

Critical to the motive behind the introduction of Fadama III project in Benue state is to enhance the income of rural farmers and the vulnerable groups and by extension, reduce poverty in the State. Thus, the performance of Fadama III project in Benue state in relation to poverty reduction could be understood in the context of productive capacity, economic opportunities, increase income, empowerment and the general wellbeing of the people. Meanwhile, our field survey suggests that some benefits of Fadama III project especially for participants and their immediate environment were unsustainable and thus, its impact on poverty reduction in Benue state was highly unimpressive (Chilebo, 2019). First and foremost, Fadama III was not properly positioned as an instrument support to the rural poor and enhances their productive capacity. Fadama III project was not fully implemented in Benue state and the limited resources, time, space and general implementation challenges of Fadama III project hindered it from adding value to the physical, mental, psychological, technical and scientific capacity of generality of the Benue populace. The contribution of counterpart funds by the State and participating Local Government Areas on Benue state was low and the inability to pay up counterpart fund have contributed to the low performance of the Fadama III project. This explains the non-participation of Benue State in the on-going Fadama III project termed Fadama III additional financing which is focused on value addition to crops like cassava and rice closing up in 2019 (Doki, 2018). Reduction of poverty also entails empowering the people and enhancing their access to healthcare, education, housing, employment, sanitation, water supply, adequate nutrition and socio-economic infrastructure. Fadama III project emphasises agriculture productivity at the expense of investment in human capacity



development and basic needs; which of course are fundamental indicators of poverty in any society. More so, implementation of Fadama III in Benue state was basically an affair of the rural elites and thus, could not provide equal economic opportunities for the generality of the people. Ojowu (2011) observes that improved access of women to Fadama III services is vital to the attainment of poverty reduction since women carry out most of the agricultural activities. According to Rahman (2013) reported that women have not been given opportunity to realize their full economic potential in agricultural development programmes, as a result of traditional gender-based subordination and disparity between men and women in the size of landholdings and other agricultural resources. Though Fadama III project could not bring about sustainable and impressive impact on poverty reduction in Benue state, small scale community infrastructure was provided to beneficiaries in their various communities. These included rehabilitation of access roads, construction of bridges and culverts, market stores, cold rooms, construction/installation of processing machines among others. The programme also provided advisory services and inputs support such as improved seeds, agro chemicals and agricultural extension services.

Generally, expected increase in the income of the rural people with corresponding impact on enhanced standard of their living was largely not achieved due to faulty implementation of Fadama III project in Benue state. Generality of the people including the participants could not afford good and balanced diet and clothing nor pay their wards school fees nor afford medical services nor afford a decent accommodation. Though, farmers experienced improvement during the first production cycle of the project, their situation returned to status quo afterwards. This situation was worsen by the fact that most of the farmers did not considered agriculture as a business but rather as a cultural way of life (Doki, 2018). Meanwhile, failure of Fadama III project to impact on poverty reduction on the sustainable basis is largely attributed to lack of good governance infrastructure as well as lack of commitment and political will on the part of the government of Benue state. Partial implementation of Fadama III project in Benue state on account of poor management of counterpart funds both the State and participating Local Governments greatly affected the success of the project in terms of enhanced agricultural productivity, improved income and indeed, poverty reduction in Benue state.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

This study interrogates the impact of the World Bank programme Fadama III project on poverty reduction in Benue State. The essence is to ascertain the extent to which the implementation of Fadama III project (2008 – 2017) has brought about improvement in the living standard, or not in Benue state given reports of the worsening poverty situation in the State and Nigeria in general. The study discovered that though Fadama III project recorded some positive achievements in Benue state as can be seen from the implementation document of the programme by the State Coordination Office, the impact of the project on poverty reduction were unsustainable and unimpressive. The point being that, increased income of participants during the implementation period especially the first year, does not translate to poverty reduction as majority of the people continued to wallow in abject poverty in Benue state. Thus, it is safe to argue in line with



the theoretical framework of this study that while Fadama III project was confronted with several implementation challenges, the failure of the project like many other agriculture and rural development initiatives in Benue state could be attributed to poor governance and state's failure.

Though Fadama III project in Benue state was implemented from the period of 2008 to 2017, and the Benue State Government was unable to participate in the additional grant which was to last till 2019 due to poor management of counter funds, it is not out of place to make some recommendations which are not only necessary for the implementation of similar interventions for the reduction of poverty and rural development in Benue state and Nigeria's whole. Therefore, it must be noted that, there appeared to be a paradigm shift as a result of global challenges of poverty, unemployment and the related issues which in turn requires new thinking, creativity and strategies. More importantly, addressing the problem of poverty in Benue state and Nigeria at large must be seen beyond the rhetoric of "government should". However, no ideological disposition of any society is it capitalist or socialist has undermined the critical role of the state in the initiation, design, funding, support, and implementation of development policy and programme. Meanwhile, contemporary realities call for vision plans that truly reflect the socio-economic and historical reality of the people whereby people would be made the means and ends of any development programme including Fadama III. It calls for a sustainable vision plan, creativity and initiative that can position the people to create wealth, food and jobs with the government creating the enabling environment. The success of any programme in Benue state and Nigeria at large evolves along with attitudes of political leadership and the need for institutional building for the sustainability and credibility of the programme. This requires the efforts of all stakeholders and to change the way things are done in the State. As important as the Fadama III project and other government programmes may appear to be, they will still remain a vision if the political leadership does not develop the right attitudes and create enabling environment to implement them.

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