

Likeminds Cooperative Projects and Poverty Alleviation in Conflict Zones: Perspective from Borno state, Nigeria

Ibrahim Mohammed
Adamu Hamma Daura
Ezekiel Ali Balami

Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri, Nigeria.

famoz2000@yahoo.com; abtchadaura@unimaid.edu.ng; balammieze@gmail.com

Abstract

This research study examined the role of likeminds cooperative project on poverty alleviation especially in conflict areas and perspective from Borno state. Survey research method was used to obtain sample of 399 persons. Primary and secondary data were used as sources of data collection with purposive sampling techniques utilized for selecting respondents. Inferential statistics was used for data analysis. The study revealed that Likeminds cooperative Projects has enhances the socio-economic status of many people such as the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Vulnerable individuals in the benefiting communities through saving culture. It further revealed that beneficiaries easily accessed livelihood support such as foods, water and health facilities thereby improving their standard of living. The study concludes that involvement of Likeminds cooperative Project in alleviating poverty has changed the life of the farmers, artisans, IDPs, Vulnerable and other poor people in Borno state. The study considered the period 2012 – 2022 under review as its limitations and recommended that there is need to provide adequate financial support to the organization to complement effort of the existing donors. Government should create an enabling environment through policy such as free taxation to such agencies in order to attract other interested individuals.

Keywords: Likeminds Projects, Poverty, Vulnerable and saving culture

1. Introduction

Global economic meltdown continues to affect the livelihood of people around the world, which resulted to almost half of the world population living in a miserable condition. Poverty remains the major player whose alleviation become a major challenge to the human society. Therefore, World Bank (2000) described poverty and sees it as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, with economic dimension that centers on nature and level of material deprivations which afflict the poor, and distinguishes them from the non-poor. It is also characterized by lack of participation in decision-making and in civil, social and cultural life.

Poverty in Nigeria has given rise to many social problems, some of which, not only impose enormous economic and social costs upon the non-poor and society in general, but also threatened the survival and stability of the society. In these regards, the Governments of Nigeria at different levels and time have designed and implemented numerous Programmes targeted at alleviating poverty and improving the living conditions of the people which will bring about a sustainable National Development. Among which are the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution (GR), Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), Better Life for Rural Women and Family Support Programme (FSP), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Poverty Eradication Program me (NAPEP) and National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy

(NEEDS), Millennium Development Goals, Sure-P, Vision 2020 etc. Unfortunately, the quality of life of Nigerians had remained unenviable low, despite the huge budgetary allocations by different levels of governments to these poverty reductions and sustainable national development Programs (Orji, 2005). With the negative experience shown by the government on the poverty alleviation Programme, non-governmental organizations key in to complement the efforts of government in that regards. Hence, the introduction of the Likeminds Cooperative Project whose primary objective was poverty eradication especially to farmers, traders, business men and women as well as other vulnerable persons to established their businesses. It also targeted at fostering business entrepreneurial skill for income generation and reduction of hardship among the needy.

Furthermore, studies on poverty and strategies for eradicating the menace were carried out by many scholars within and outside the Academia. Yet significant evidence in literature have proven failure in capacity and methodologies of those programs and project especially at the stage of implementation. Therefore, the likeminds cooperative project might not be certainly be an exception from the previous intervention Programme that preceded over. However, it becomes apparently necessary to critically examine the perspective of the likeminds cooperative project considering its pledge and poverty alleviation in the crises affected areas and understand the extent of successes and challenges in order to fill in the knowledge gap.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Poverty Alleviation

World Bank (2000) describes poverty as a multi-dimensional phenomenon and sees it as a state of short or long-term deprivation and insecurity in basic human needs. Chamber Universal Learners' Dictionary defines poverty as the condition of being poor. Poverty is a multi-faced phenomenon that actually hinders the satisfaction of human basic life requirements, i.e. the condition that deprives the individual the necessities for existence such as good food, potable water, shelter, clothing as well as those that bother on the security of life as health, education opportunities and freedom (spencer, 2005).

Poverty manifests not only in the lack of adequate access to physical capital but also entailed deprivation of natural, social as well as human capital; natural capital in the sense of land, water, animals, trees and minerals while physical includes tools, machines, human capital as well as land and building improvement (Ellis, 2000). In fact, poverty is a condition whereby an individual is unable to generate sufficient income to secure the basic standard of living and this situation manifest in all sphere of life in most post-colonial African countries like Nigeria.

Alleviating this phenomenon has become the biggest challenge to the world at large because of it multi-dimensional, deep-seated and complex nature. Therefore, there has been search for such community based approaches that can overall fight against multidimensional poverty and also generates confidence in the communities after numerous pro –poor growth approaches such as mercantilists approach on foreign trade, classical economists approaches and industrial revolution as well as basic needs and capabilities/entitlements approaches failed to generate adequate results to complement their effort (Ijaiya, 2002, Boeniniger 1991, Woolcock and Narayan 2000, United Nation 2004).

Poverty alleviation refers to deliberate policies or strategies instituted by governments and non-governmental organizations aimed at tackling the problems associated with poverty situation. In other words, it means deliberately designed policies and actions either by individuals, groups, communities, national governments or international bodies aimed at reducing the misery, hardship and suffering of people in a given place at a particular time.

The problem of poverty alleviation in Nigeria by successive governments therefore becomes more complicated such that, personal interest rather than national interest usually affect the way policies are made and implemented (Abbas, 2013). This becomes unfortunate for the poor

persons who remain victims of such circumstances. Unfortunately, responsible individuals who are to outline the policy problem to be tackled, usually exert their personal interest above public interest hereby undermining the whole poverty alleviation process.

This predicament thus shows that government's poverty alleviation efforts did not yield expected results as most of the decisions were not derived from rational choices. These historical lessons have also led to recognition in Nigeria that poverty alleviation should not be a matter of government alone but high priority should also be given to efforts made by non-governmental organizations like the cooperative societies.

2.2 Roles of cooperative societies in poverty alleviation

Cooperative societies help both members and employees to escape from poverty or to protect those of them who may be facing the risk of poverty. "Cooperative is not a philanthropic institution. It exists only to help its members and indirectly help the society in which it exists (Okechukwu 2001). In many countries, cooperatives are in the forefront in production and marketing of food stuffs, electricity, and consumer goods as well as financial insurance and social services.

The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), the United Nations (UN) and other international agencies, cooperative can join the international movement for promoting transparency and enforcing international standards. Reports to the general assemblies of the UN on cooperative (1994). The secretary general suggested that cooperative, an enterprise provide the organisation a means whereby a significant proportion of humanity is able to take into own hands the tasks of creating productive employment, overgrowing poverty, and achieving social integrations. He added that "cooperative have continued to be an important means often the only one available whereby the poor as well as those better off but at the perpetual risk of becoming poor, have been able to achieve economic security and acceptable standard of living and quality of life (Imoisili 2001). In most part of the world, cooperative societies remain in fluxes which are majorly faced with one or more problems ranging from the crises of ideology, capital formation, problems of acceptability and credibility as well as crises of management (Taimni, 1997). Five major challenges of cooperative societies have also been identified by Cheney (1995) to include cultural transformation, competition and expansion, wage solidarity, centralization and reorganization, and policies and programmes of increasing, productivity and participation.

While on the other hand Groves (1985) emphasises that the major problems of cooperatives are how to strike a balance between efficiency and democracy as the major part of co-operative business. i.e imbibing good business practices and the social purpose of a community of people, making it an organizations with a human face and therefore difficult to manage.

Laidlaw (1974) emphasis that whenever cooperatives tend to strive for efficiency they try to imitate other businesses but in the pursue of social functions they possess the features that differentiate them from other organizations which make it a very difficult business to manage. Education makes people easy to lead and govern but difficult to drive and enslave, educating cooperatives members in this post-colonial African countries like Nigeria is always a challenge to the organizations and the governments. Ihenacho, Chikaire, Ejiogu- Okereke, Oguegbuchulam, Osuagwu and Obi (2012) also concluded in their studies that; job creation, facilitation of financial services, educational support, labor exchange as well as mutual aids are the fundamental of poverty reduction and sustainable to National Development Strategies of major cooperative societies in most African countries like Nigeria and therefore encourage the promotion of cooperative activities vigorously.

The need to expand educational services in all aspect of cooperative management and the desire to protect the investment of the citizenry couple with it relevance's to socio-economic development of the state prompted Lagos State government to established cooperative college

in Agege area of the state to cater and provide a short –duration capacity building intervention to officials of cooperative societies in the state metropolis (Lagos State Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperative, 2013).

Dogarawa (2005) also posited that for cooperative societies to leave up to its expectation of viability and sustainability it must be operated on two inter-related goals, such as economic viability and innovative enterprise so as to be effective in poverty reduction. While Adekunle and Henson (2007) were also of the opinion that entrepreneurial alertness was imbibed in the consciousness of members as soon as they become members will go a long way to give social protection to the members. Nweze and Onuoha (2001) also emphasis in their studies that government should be less hostile to cooperatives but supportive to its operation by eliminating operational policies that might be inimical to the operation in order to give more emphasis on poverty reduction.

2.3 Theoretical framework

The research work has adopted/anchor on **income redistribution approaches** which advocated re-distribution of income and emphasises that, poverty can better be reduced if radical redistribution of income is allowed to take place in view of the interlocking power and self –interest of the rich and the bureaucracy in the handling of each nation resources Chenery, Ahluwalia, Bell, Dulloy & Jolly (1974). This were done to address the inadequacy in the policy makers response to the growing level of poverty and unemployment with a desire to provide relevant solution to the problems associated with poverty in the land. In Nigeria, governments at different levels and at various stages allowed other agencies of concern have adopted various strategies at one point or the other so as to key in their suggestions so as to reduce poverty and enhance sustainable development.

3. Methodology

The population of the study consist of 5,860,000 people as at the 2016 according to the estimated population report of NPC (2022). Sample size of 399 using Taro Yamane’s formula was drawn from the population. Purposive sampling used as the sampling techniques for the distribution of questionnaires to the following categories of people: Victims of boko haram insurgent, Farmers, traditional rulers, religious leaders among others are the target population. Data were sourced from both primary and secondary sources. The method adopted for collecting primary data in this research work was through administration of questionnaires, while the secondary Data was obtained from existing records and other documented materials. The study analyzed data collected through inferential statistical tools by the use of table, figures, simple percentage and by the use of content analysis to summarize the responses of respondents.

4. Results and Discussion of Major Findings

Table 4.1: Respondents Rating on Provision of Fertilizers and Agricultural Inputs to the farmer.

| Respondents | Frequency | Percentage% |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Excellent | 94 | 29.94 |
| Good | 180 | 57.32 |
| Undecided | 12 | 3.82 |
| Fair | 26 | 8.28 |
| Poor | 2 | 0.64 |
| Total | 314 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 4.2.1 indicates that 94 respondents representing (29.94%) are those that excellent. 180 respondents representing (57.32%) are those that good while, (12) respondents representing (3.82%) are undecided and (26) respondents representing (8.28%) are those that fair while (2)

respondents representing (0.64%) are those that poor. This implies that likeminds cooperative project has adequately provides fertilizer and agricultural inputs to the farmer

Table 4.2: Respondents view on Training of People on Programs that cover Modern Agriculture practices in the area of Live-stork Management and other Agro- allied Ventures.

| Respondents | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Excellent | 86 | 27.39 |
| Good | 166 | 52.59 |
| Undecided | 24 | 7.64 |
| Fair | 36 | 11.46 |
| Poor | 2 | 0.64 |
| Total | 314 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 4.2 shows that (86) respondents representing (27.39%) excellent. While (166) respondents representing (52.59%) rated the performance of the cooperative as good on that area. (24) Respondents representing (7.64%) undecided while 35 of the respondents representing (11.46%) classified it as fair and 2 respondents representing (0.64%) said poor. This implies that likeminds cooperative project has trained people on programme that cover modern agriculture practice in the area of livestock management and other agro-allied ventures.

Table 4.3: Respondents rating on Empowerment of men and women through skill acquisition by Likemind cooperative Projects

| Respondents | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Excellent | 70 | 22.29 |
| Good | 156 | 49.68 |
| Undecided | 56 | 17.83 |
| Fair | 18 | 5.13 |
| Poor | 14 | 4.46 |
| Total | 314 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 4.3 indicates that 70 respondents representing (22.29%) are those that rates excellent while 156 respondents representing (49.68%) rates as good. Undecided have 56 respondents representing (17.83%) those that claimed fair and poor has (18) and (14) respondents with (5.13%) and (4.46%) respectively. This implies that empowerment of men and women through skill acquisition by Likemind cooperative projects reduces poverty.

Table 4.4: Likemind Projects training youth in different trades to enable them be self-reliant in reducing poverty.

| Respondents | Frequency | Percentage % |
|-------------------|------------|--------------|
| Strongly agree | 66 | 21.02 |
| Agree | 172 | 54.78 |
| Undecided | 40 | 12.74 |
| Disagree | 26 | 8.28 |
| Strongly disagree | 10 | 3.18 |
| Total | 314 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 4.4 indicates that 66 respondent representing (21.02%) response on strongly agreed, while agreed has 172 respondents representing (54.78%). 40 representing (12.74%) undecided while 26 respondents representing (8,28%) disagreed, 10 Respondents representing (3.18%) strongly disagree. This implies that likeminds project training youth in different trades to enable them be self-reliant in reducing poverty.

Table 4.5: Likemind Projects enhances the socio-economic status of members through savings culture.

| Respondents | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|------------|------------|
| Strongly agree | 80 | 25.48 |
| Agree | 164 | 52.23 |
| Undecided | 38 | 12.10 |
| Disagree | 28 | 8.92 |
| Strongly disagree | 4 | 1.27 |
| Total | 314 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 4.5 indicates that 80 respondents representing (25.48%) are those that strongly agreed. 164 respondents representing (52.23%) are those that agreed. While undecided 38 respondents representing (12.10%) and 28 respondents representing (8.92%) are those that disagreed. 4 respondents representing (1.27%) strongly disagreed. This implies that Likemind Projects enhances the socio-economic status of members through savings culture

Table 4.6: Likemind Projects does not have any significant impact in poverty alleviation.

| Respondents | Frequency | Percentage % |
|-------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Strongly agree | 14 | 3.18 |
| Agree | 34 | 13.36 |
| Undecided | 46 | 14.65 |
| Disagree | 140 | 44.59 |
| Strongly disagree | 80 | 25.48 |
| Total | 314 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 4.6: shows that 14 respondents representing (3.18%) strongly agreed while 34 respondents representing (13.36%) agreed, 46 respondents representing (14.65%) undecided while 140 respondents representing (44.59%) disagreed and 80 respondent representing (25.48%) strongly disagree. This implies that Likemind Projects have a significant impact in poverty alleviation in Borno state.

Table 4.7: Likemind Projects enable members get access to cash or in the form of goods, thereby improving their socio-economic status.

| Respondents | Frequency | Percentage % |
|-------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Strongly agree | 84 | 26.75 |
| Agree | 148 | 47.13 |
| Undecided | 30 | 9.55 |
| Disagree | 38 | 12.10 |
| Strongly disagree | 14 | 4.46 |
| Total | 314 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 4.7 indicates that 84 respondents representing (26.75%) are those that strongly agree while, 148 respondents representing (47.13%) are those that agree. While 30 respondents representing (9.55%) are those that are undecided. 38 respondents representing (9.55%) are those that disagree while 14 respondents representing (4.46%) are those that strongly disagree. This implies that Likemind Projects enable members get access to cash or in the form of goods, thereby improving their socio-economic status.

5. Discussion of Major Findings

Findings obtained from fundamental questions revealed that Likeminds project have done very well in provision of fertilizer and agricultural inputs such as pesticides, etc to the farmer. This study is in agreement with the findings by Adeyeye, 2003). According to Adebayo (1997), a

good number of NGOs in Nigeria have focused on the declining state of agricultural inputs and poverty. The focus of NGOs in the provision of agricultural inputs and in alleviating poverty has made them the best reliable alternative institutions for rural people in terms of improving their socio-economic conditions. In spite of this, poverty continues to rear its ugly head among the rural people.

Similarly, the study also unveiled that Likeminds project have also contributed on training of people on programme that encompassed Agricultural practice in the area of livestock management and other agro-allied ventures. This study was in agreement with the findings by Mohamed (2010) that the community in design and implementation of poverty reduction programs, and the need to adopt an integrative approach that not only delivers programs based on service delivery, as is the current focus, but that complements this with a stronger role in advocacy and policy influence. Furthermore, the findings revealed that Empowerment of men and women through skill acquisition by Likemind projects reduces poverty. This study was in agreement with Ahsan Ullah, (2003) there he said that NGO interventions positively contribute to women empowerment.

Moreover, the study revealed that Likeminds project has focus on training of youth in different trades to enable them be self-reliant in reducing poverty. This study is in agreement with (Bratton 1990) said that potential of NGOs in their capacity to generate self-help initiative however is said NGOs have the potential to be significant vehicles of empowerment because of their ability to reach grassroots. Furthermore, the study revealed that Likemind Projects has enhances the socio-economic status of members through savings culture. This study was in agreement with the findings of Oke and Adeyemo (2007) wrote on the impact of Non-governmental Organizations on rural poverty alleviation in South-western Nigeria, which said that that belonging to the clients' group alleviated poverty as well as enhanced savings of respondents.

Similarly, the study revealed that Likemind Projects have significant relationship with poverty alleviation programmes. This study was in agreement with the findings of s (Brass, 2012) which stated that social relations analysis, for example, tend to see a more critical need for empowerment strategies at the grassroots level while gender efficiency advocates rely more heavily on changing the conceptual frameworks used by planners and policy makers. Moreover, the study revealed that Likemind Projects enable members get access to cash or in the form of goods, thereby improving their socio-economic status. This study is in agreement with the findings of (Todd & Palakudiyil, 2004: 60) that the women were persuaded to form self-help groups as a vehicle to save money and discuss the ways of improving their life.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concluded that the involvement of Likeminds Cooperative Projects in alleviating poverty has changed the life of the poor people of Borno state. By designing and implementing innovative program interventions, they have enhanced the quality of life of the poor. They have facilitated the poor to reach a first foothold on the development ladder. Despite the challenges confronting NGOs in carrying out its activities in the study area, the respondents confirmed that maximum benefits was recorded in terms of increased income, use of good transportation means, good accommodation, feeding and sleeping materials. This is in line with the basic need approach which defined poverty alleviation in terms of ability to have access to certain basic needs like transportation, good accommodation and feeding, good sleeping materials and improved income. Base on the research findings and the conclusions the researcher wishes to make the following recommendations: The beneficiaries are also urged to take their training seriously. This is an era of promoting entrepreneurship and financial independence and it is only through such skills that they can propel themselves into entrepreneurship and financial independence. There is need to provide the avenue for addressing the problems and challenges

of likeminds project in alleviating poverty. Mobilization and awareness of the public on the relevance of cooperative society should be encouraged and emulated by all sundry. Serene environment should be created for people that have interest to join the cooperative by government in terms of policy regime. It is also recommended that the government together with NGOs should come up with strategies of registering people by engaging them in training and educating them on their roles in the society.

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