

EVALUATION OF POVERTY REDUCTION PROGRAMMES BETWEEN 2015-2023 IN CROSS RIVER STATE

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Abstract

The study focused on the evaluation of poverty reduction programmes in Cross River State. To achieve this purpose, two objectives and two research questions were raised. Literatures were reviewed according to the variables of the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of this study was 37,778 respondents. Sample of the study was 948 respondents. Multi-stage sampling technique consisting of stratified and accidental sampling techniques were used to select respondents used for the study. A questionnaire titled "Evaluation of Poverty Reduction Programme Questionnaire (EPRPQ) was developed by the researchers and used for data collection. The instrument was validated by experts in measurement and evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha and the coefficient of the sub scale ranged from .83-.97. Data collection was carried out by the researchers with the aid of other research assistants. Analysis of the data was carried out using simple percentage. The result showed that; national home grown school feeding programme is effective in reducing poverty in Cross River State. Finding also revealed that Government enterprise and empowerment programme is effective in reducing poverty in Cross River State. Recommendations were made among others that government should focus more on how school feeding programme can effectively contribute to improving educational outcome and meeting the nutrition and health needs of school age children.

Keywords: Evaluation, Poverty, Poverty Reeducation and Programmes.



Introduction

The United Nations in September, 2000, introduced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with new global initiative to tackle poverty. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was to terminate in 2015 while a new global programme tagged " Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)" was initiated to combat poverty globally. The Sustainable Development Goals are set of objectives within universal agreement to end poverty, protect all that make the planet habitable and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

The SDGs seeks to eradicate extreme poverty and reduce at least by half, the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty. The SDGs initiate national appropriate social protection systems and measures to achieve substantial coverage.

It seeks to ensure that all men, women and children, particularly the poor and the vulnerable have equal rights to economic resources as well as access to basic services required to build the resilience against poverty now and in the future (United Nation, 2015). The Goals were adopted by the United Nation General Assembly 2015 session consisting of 189 nations (including Nigeria), after their resolution to combat poverty at all levels of human life by improving the standard of living of the people. The goals were based on the belief that men, women, and children would be free from abject poverty and other dehumanizing conditions in human settlements by 2030. The purpose is to address the over-whelming empirical evidences that the world needs a more radically sustainable approach to fight poverty (Fasokun, 2008; Akpama, et al., 2012; Ihekoronye et al., 2020).

Poverty has eaten deep into every aspect of human life. The situation is more critical in spite of the vast resources committed to poverty reduction by different successive administrations in Nigeria. Most communities in Nigeria still suffer high illiteracy level, lack of access to basic health care, inequitable opportunities, unsafe drinking water and lack of safe sanitation facilities among others. Although, Nigeria is considered as one of the West African countries with the highest mineral resources and of the abundant agricultural resources such as oil, cocoa and cotton. Yet poverty remains significantly high with 63% of the populace living on less than \$1 per day, (Opara et al., 2020; Aiyedogbon & Ohwofasa, 2018). Many families can hardly feed or have access to qualitative education while many are unable to settle basic medical bills due to poverty. Among other States of Nigeria, poverty rate in Cross River State seems to particularly deplorable as it can be seen in many rural communities and urban slums (Felix et al. 2021). A recent estimate of the poverty index in Nigeria (2024 – 2025): overall, about 56.0% of Nigerians are now living below the national poverty line. The estimated number of people living in poverty recently rose to around 139 million. Poverty is significantly worse in rural areas, where about 75.5% of rural Nigerians are now considered poor. For urban dwellers, the poverty rate is estimated at about 41.3%. (World Bank, 2025).

A number of poverty reduction programmes have been initiated by successive governments in Nigeria to reduce the country's rising poverty incidences as enumerated by Ilesanmi and Lasisi (2015), Ogunode et al. (2024), Okoli, (2015), Ozoana (2013), Ijaiya, (2000) Ajakaiye and Olomola (2018) The poverty reduction programmes include: Agricultural Development Projects (ADP), Cross River Basin Development Authority, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution (GR), Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), Family Support Programme (FSP), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and National Economic Empowerment, Development Strategy (NEEDS).

Unfortunately, no tangible achievements were recorded from all these programmes as solution proffered to the rising poverty incidences in Nigeria. This implies that the various anti-poverty mechanisms seem to have yielded no corresponding effect. Rather, massive failures have been recorded. This may be due to weak industrial and technological base, ethnic politics, low productivity, among other implementation bottleneck challenges. Consequently, the unabated degree of poverty align with useful scholarly suggestions on workable measures to address this trend, Ndiyo, (2008), (Eteng & Hillary, 2016); In the face of this negative situation, the following questions come to mind; why is poverty still prevalent in Nigeria and Cross River State in particular? Is the problem so enormous that government at all levels are incapacitated to solve it. The questions is, what is the strategy adopted for the implementation of these poverty reduction programmes? Are the beneficiaries of these programmes the real target population? Has the poor population in the rural setting ever come across these poverty reduction programmes? The attempt to answer these questions triggered the researchers' quest to evaluate poverty reduction programmes between 2015-2023 in Cross River State, Nigeria.

In evaluating this study, the researchers therefore sought to find out whether the poverty reduction programmes of the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari between 2015 to 2023 implemented under the umbrella of the National Social Investment Scheme (N -SIP) has helped to reduce poverty in Cross River State. This is because, the programmes were structured to ensure a more equitable distribution of resources to vulnerable populations, including men, women, youth and children. The aim is to strengthen citizens, skills and capacities as well as support them to fully participate in employment and social life. These programmes are: N-power, National School feeding programme (NSFP), National Cash Transfer Programme (NCTP), Youth Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture (YISA), Information Communication Technology Programme (ICTP), and Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP). As a strategy, the N -SIP was designed to reduce poverty and to enable citizens live beyond exit from the level of poverty and as earlier mentioned, through capacity building, investment and direct financial support (Collins, 2022; Ebele & Paul, 2020).

In the same vain, beyond developing healthy learners, national home grown school feeding programme, halts poverty cycle in the community, as farmers and local food vendors benefited immeasurably from it. It increase the demand for farmers to produce more raw food to vendors .On the other hand, vendors join the productivity of food by providing food service to the school children. This productivity cycle challenge them and as such serves as a motivation to work harder and smarter in order to meet the demands of their products. This initiative helped to reduce poverty among community members.

Poverty reduction through the National Economic Empowerment and Development Scheme was initiated to provide skills/ leadership training and job network to youth .Provide microloans and financial literacy training to women entrepreneurs. The progreamme also Identifies local barriers to agricultural opportunities/livelihood and adopt, village projects to address extreme poverty holistically in communities that lack the resources to meet basic human needs. This is because, when people or individuals have money in their hands, the outcomes is better health for the family, children are educated and make communities more viable and sustainable (Rotary International Intervention, 2018). The objectives of the National Economic Empowerment Development Scheme are:

1. Empowering people and improving social service delivery.
2. Fostering economic growth, in particular to the vulnerable group.
- 3 Enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of government, while improving governance.
4. Wealth creation and employment opportunities for graduate and non-graduates.

The reduction of poverty is based on the positive multiplier effects for more diffuse groups of people in the community, such as small farmers, traders, small and medium rural enterprises, or other actors along the value chain who achieved higher incomes. The more local these actors are, the more they will spend their additional income in the local economy, thereby increasing business for other providers of goods and services. In addition, as they expand their businesses, these local actors generate spin-off benefits such as increased turnover and profits for others such as traders and transporters, and possibly employment and income for additional staff (Food and Agricultural Organization and World Food Programme, 2018).

Unfortunately, in spite of all these programmes, poverty has continued to deepen on a daily basis especially in Cross River State. In an analysis of the poverty index in Nigeria, the Vanguard newspaper dated May 21, 2021, a whopping 6.3% was attributed to the Cross River State alone. This implies that, the entire population of all the 196 wards in Cross River State, is grossly impoverished. This assertion is further substantiated by then Commissioner for International Development Corporation, Dr. Inyang Asibong while flagging off the

campaign for initiation of Rapid Response Registrar, (RRR) in Calabar that poverty has ravaged the entire Cross River State.(Vanguard News Paper, May 2021).

The increase in poverty among individual households that have not yielded to the corresponding effort of poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria and Cross River State particularly makes it essential to evaluate carefully and to establish poverty reduction programmes that would provide an insight of the poverty reduction.

School feeding programme is an organized programme to reduce hunger while supporting parents who are not financially buoyant in providing breakfast for their children (WFP, 2017). This implies that, school feeding as a poverty reduction programme assists caregivers to send their children to school without depending on home or family breakfast.

Rogers (2021) posit that, school feeding programmes have positive impact on daily attendance of pupils to school. According to the author, School feeding programme has been successful in most improvised communities and has a good intervention as it reduces poverty which in turn encourage parent to take advantage of sending their children to school without breakfast, thereby increasing school participation through poverty intervention. Kenneth, Briggs, Nwankwo, Offor, Onyinye Enyindah and Bala (2016) carried out a study on the assessment of national home-grown school feeding programme of the former president Muhammadu Buhari administration between 2016-2021. The researchers assert that, home-grown school feeding programme was born out of the desire to reduce the malnutrition index recorded in Nigeria and at the same time help increase the rate of students' enrollment in school and to reduce poverty among the adult population. This study was guided by two research questions and two objectives which included to identify the challenges militating against the successful implementation of the national home-grown school feeding programme in Nigeria and to proffer strategies which can improve the national home-grown school feeding programme and other policy initiatives in Nigeria. The study was anchored on adopted systems theory of analysis and made use of secondary and primary data drawn mainly from journals, textbooks and other online sources. Survey research design and purposive sampling technique were adopted respectively for the study. The study administered 300 copies of research questionnaires to the three sampled Community Primary Schools across Nigeria out of which, 286 copies of questionnaires were retrieved and used for the analysis. Data were presented in tabular format and analyzed using simple percentage method. Findings of the study proved that poor programme coverage, inadequate funding and high cost of food items were challenges facing the programme. Consequently, the study recommended amongst others, that proper planning/management of the food vendors be improved for standard and quality of food and coordinated food supply for each state to help the programme succeed.

In addition, Okoi and Omang (2018) carried out an empirical analysis of poverty and well-being dwellers in Yakurr Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The study specifically examined the effect of poverty on the quality of food and health care services access by rural dwellers in the study area. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting four hundred (400) respondents from the rural areas of Yakurr local government area of Cross River State. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Data collected were statistically analyzed using linear regression, while all the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the analysis revealed that poverty significantly affected the quality of food consumed by rural dwellers in the study. It also revealed that poverty significantly affect the quality of health care services accessed by rural dwellers in Yakurr local government area of Cross River State. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that government, non-government organizations and wealthy individuals should contribute to the generation of employment, provision of social amenities, support basic health needs and means to promote agricultural production that can increase the standard of living of the rural people.

The Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP) is an initiative by the Federal Government of Nigeria to provide financial inclusion and access to micro-credit for Nigerians at the bottom of the economic pyramid. This is aimed at to providing capital to

beneficiaries in an easily accessible way to grow their business and on-board these beneficiaries into the formal financial system through bank accounts, mobile wallets and formal identities.

Odey, Agba, and Kina (2019) carried out a study on the effect of government small scale and medium enterprise operations on the wellbeing of rural dwellers in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. The study was guided by two objectives and thereafter formulated two null hypotheses to test the correlates between the major variables. Survey research design was adopted in selecting 576 respondents purposively from the study area. Data were generated through primary and secondary sources. Information from the primary source was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistical technique at 0.5 level of significance. Findings indicated that there was a correlate between petty trading, artisans work and the wellbeing of rural dwellers. The study recommended among others that government and other agencies should adopt small and medium enterprises as a vital tool for enhancing wellbeing among rural dwellers. Financial assistance should also be given to existing small and medium enterprises in rural areas to expand their operation. For government enterprise and empowerment programme for poverty reduction to survive there is need for the establishment of small and medium enterprise as a strategy for poverty reduction.

Also, Odey, Agba, and Kina (2019) pointed out that, financial assistance should be given to existing small and medium enterprises in rural areas to expand their operations in order to survive. Government enterprise and empowerment programme should be equipped to enhance for poverty reduction. Edom, Egu and Emori (2015) carried out a study on small and medium enterprises for financing and poverty reduction in Nigeria. The study adopted ordinary least square analytical technique; data from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) statistical bulletin were obtained. Findings revealed that there was a significant relationship between small and medium enterprises, financing and poverty reduction in Nigeria; It was therefore concluded that small and medium enterprises financing have a positive relationship with poverty in Nigeria (Paul et al., 2019). It was therefore recommended that adequate attention be given to small and medium enterprises through channeling of more resources to the sector. The government should as a matter of urgency diversify the economy and create more jobs for the increasing population to reduce the unemployment rate in the country, thereby reducing poverty among the populace.

Tahira (2016) observes that the transformation agenda of the Jonathan and Sambo led administration had continually made this enterprise one of its poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria. The general notion of government is that small and medium enterprises are catalysts for economic growth and rural development. It is the belief of government that government enterprises and empowerment programmes are essential precondition for eliminating poverty at all levels. Thus, rural dwellers participation in government small and medium enterprises as a vital tool for reducing extreme poverty and improving the socio-economic wellbeing of society becomes critical. Carter (2017) observes that government small and medium enterprises for economic empowerment have acquired a significant stature in the socioeconomic development of the people. The role of government enterprise and empowerment on small and medium enterprises in promoting wellbeing has also been acknowledged by Cook and Nixson (2018), Akanji (20016), Kushnir, Laura, Rita (2010), and Asean (2018). In Nigeria, where the private sector is not well developed, small and medium enterprises are assumed to play the role of employment generation, facilitator of economic recovery and rural development. They are also believed to contribute about 70 percent to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and account for about 60 percent of businesses in Nigeria. More generally, the development of small and medium enterprises are seen as accelerating the achievement of wider socio-economic objectives which include poverty reduction and enhanced wellbeing of rural dwellers (Cook & Nixson, 2018; Attah, Agba, & Nkpoyen, 2016).

Ifeanyi, and Ijeoma (2022) investigated a study on the relationship between microfinance credit and alleviation of poverty in Nigeria. The researchers pointed out that poverty can be regarded as the denial of choices and opportunities as well as defiance of human dignity. Despite all the policies and measures taken to reduce poverty, no noticeable success has been achieved in this direction. The key issue is to find out the relationship between microfinance credit and poverty alleviation in Nigeria. Using unemployment rate, fixed capital formation and per capita income as proxy for poverty alleviation, while micro finance credit were used as the independent variable of the study. The study covered a period of eleven years from 2008 to 2019. Ordinary least square regression analysis was used in testing the hypotheses of the study. The regression result found that there is a significant relationship between microfinance bank and unemployment rate in Nigeria, there was a significant relationship between microfinance bank and capital formation in Nigeria. There was a significant relationship between microfinance bank and per capita income in Nigeria. The study therefore concluded that microfinance credit has the ability of reducing rate of poverty in the country. The study therefore recommended that the Central Bank of Nigeria should regulate and monitor the activities of Microfinance and also administer specialized funds set aside to improve microcredit access at affordable cost, especially SME Credit Guarantee Schemes. It is on this basis that this study evaluated poverty reduction programmes 2015-2023 in Cross Rivers State.

Statement of problem

It is on record that almost every government administration in Nigeria has embarked on one form of poverty reduction programme or the other. However, the question that remains unanswered is the extent to which these programmes have actually changed the living conditions of the poor populace. A critical look at the subject of poverty indicates that a significant gap still exists between the target objectives in reducing poverty and its desired success among the poor populace in the study area. In spite of the poverty reduction programmes in Cross River State to reduce the rate of poverty and increase wealth for the people, has persisted among the citizenry. These could be blamed on the stakeholders responsible for the implementation of the programme which increases corrupt practices and the peoples lackadaisai attitude towards these poverty reduction programmes. A careful look at Cross River State indicates that many people appear to be dying from diseases that are even preventable. This is due to lack of access of people to have basic health care delivery and balanced diet, thereby making people unhealthy and vulnerable to any illness. Individuals or households that are self-reliant as a result of untrained labour which seem to be depending on government jobs or untrained labour.

In the midst of this situation, it is imperative to examine whether the hard work done by successive administrations had actually achieved the desired success. There is also the need to examine whether individual families or households in Cross River State between 2015-2023 have benefited from poverty reduction programmes like National Home Grown School Feeding (NHGSF) and Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP).

This study therefore sought to evaluate the poverty reduction programme in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study was to evaluate poverty reduction programme in Cross River State. Specifically, this study sought to:

1. find out how national home grown school feeding programme has helped to reduce poverty in Cross River State.
2. Ascertain how government enterprise and empowerment programme has helped to reduce poverty in Cross River State.

Research questions

The following research questions were raised for the study:

1. How has national home grown school feeding programme helped to reduce poverty in Cross River State?
2. How has government enterprise and empowerment programme helped to reduce poverty in Cross River State?

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The population of this study was 37,778 respondents. Sample of the study used was 948 respondents. Multi-stage sampling technique consisting of stratified and accidental sampling techniques were used to select respondents used for the study. A questionnaire titled "Evaluation of Poverty Reduction Programme Questionnaire (EPRPQ) was developed by the researchers and used for data collection. The instrument was validated by experts in measurement and evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha and the coefficient of the sub scale ranged from .83-.97. Data collection was carried out by the researchers with the aid of other research assistants. Analysis of the data was carried out using simple percentage.

Results

Research question one

How has national home grown school feeding helped to reduce poverty in Cross River State? To answer this research question, simple percentages were used and the result is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Simple percentages analysis of the responses on national home grown school feeding on poverty reduction

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	Through school feeding programme I have been employed as a food vendor.	432 (45.56%)	234 (24.68%)	231 (24.36%)	51 (5.37%)
2	Supplying raw food materials to food vendors has increase my income.	407 (42.93%)	251 (26.48%)	178 (18.78%)	112 (11.81%)
3	School feeding programme has relief me from the burden of provision of morning breakfast to my children.	324 (34.17%)	211 (22.26%)	342 (36.07%)	71 (7.49)
4	Government funding on school feeding has impacted my house hold	543 (57.28%)	231 (24.36%)	132 (13.92%)	37 (3.90%)
5	School feeding programme has help my children to be regular in school.	321 (33.86%)	256 (27.00%)	123 (12.97%)	248 (26.16%)
6	My children no longer go to school because of hunger.	345 (36.395)	324 (34.17%)	123 (12.97%)	156 (16.46%)
	TOTAL	2372 (41.70%)	1507 (26.49%)	1129 (19.85%)	675 (11.86%)

The results in table 1 showed that, the aggregate responses of the results implied that 2,372 responses representing 41.70% strongly agreed that national home-grown feeding programme has reduced poverty in the area, 1,507 responses representing 26.49% agreed to it, 1,129 responses representing 19.85% disagreed to it while 675 responses representing 11.86% noted that national home-grown feeding programme have not reduced poverty in the area. On aggregate, 68.19% of the responses agreed that national home grown school feeding have reduced poverty which implies that the programme reduced poverty in the area.

Research question two

How has government enterprise and empowerment programme helped to reduce poverty in Cross River State? To answer this research question, simple percentages were used and the result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Simple percentages analysis of the responses on government enterprise and empowerment programme on poverty reduction

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	Government enterprise and empowerment programme has taken away poverty from my life and family	564 (59.49%)	233 (24.58%)	111 (11.70%)	40 (4.22%)
2	I benefited from government grant to start up a small scale business.	435 (45.89%)	321 (33.86%)	89 (9.39%)	103 (10.86%)
3	I can now be able to pay my children school fee without delay.	568 (59.91%)	132 (13.92%)	87 (9.17%)	161 (16.98%)
4	I can now save for emergency because of my small scale business.	453 (47.78%)	234 (24.68%)	132 (13.92%)	129 (13.61%)
5	I need money to start up a small scale business firm.	123 (12.97%)	234 (24.60%)	231 (24.36%)	360 (37.97%)
6	I have never benefited from any government empowerment programme.	145 (15.29%)	109 (11.50%)	344 (36.29%)	350 (37.04%)
	Total	2288 (40.22%)	1263 (22.20%)	786 (13.81%)	1143 (20.09%)

The result in table 2 showed the aggregate responses of the results and it implied that 2288 responses representing 40.22% strongly agreed that Government enterprise and employment programme has reduced poverty in the area, 1,268 responses representing 22.20% agreed to it, 786 responses representing 13.81% disagreed to it while 1148 responses representing 20.09% noted that government enterprise and empowerment programme have not reduced poverty in the area. On aggregate, 66.42% of the responses agreed that government enterprise and empowerment programme have reduced poverty which implies that programme reduced poverty in the area.

Discussion of findings

Research question 1

How has national home grown school feeding helped to reduce poverty in Cross River State? Items in table 1 investigated how national home grown school feeding programme has contributed to poverty reduction in Cross River State. The findings of this study is in line with that of (WFP, 2017), who posit that school feeding programme is an organized programme to reduce hunger while supporting parents who are not financially buoyant in providing breakfast for their children. This implies that, school feeding as a poverty reduction programme assists care givers to send their children to school without depending on home or family breakfast.

Rogers (2021) posit that, school feeding programmes have positive impact on daily attendance of pupils to school. According to the author, School feeding programme has been successful in most improvised communities and has a good intervention as it reduces poverty which in turn encourage parent to take advantage of sending their children to school without breakfast, thereby increasing school participation through poverty intervention. Kenneth, Briggs, Nwankwo, Offor, Onyinye Enyindah and Bala (2016) carried out a study on the assessment of national home-grown school feeding programme of the former president Muhammadu Buhari administration between 2016-2021. The researchers assert that, home-grown school feeding programme was born out of the desire to reduce the malnutrition index

recorded in Nigeria and at the same time help increase the rate of students' enrollment in school and to reduce poverty among the adult population. Findings of the study proved that poor programme coverage, inadequate funding and high cost of food items were challenges facing the programme. Consequently, the study recommended amongst others, that proper planning/management of the food vendors be improved for standard and quality of food and coordinated food supply for each state to help the programme succeed.

In addition, Okoi and Omang (2018) carried out an empirical analysis of poverty and well-being dwellers in Yakurr Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The study specifically examined the effect of poverty on the quality of food and health care services access by rural dwellers in the study area. The result of the analysis revealed that poverty significantly affected the quality of food consumed by rural dwellers.

Research question 2

How has government enterprise and empowerment programme helped to reduce poverty in Cross River State? Items in table 2 investigated how government enterprise and empowerment programme has contributed to poverty reduction in Cross River State.

The Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP) is an initiative by the Federal Government of Nigeria to provide financial inclusion and access to micro-credit for Nigerians at the bottom of the economic pyramid. This is aimed at providing capital to beneficiaries in an easily accessible way to grow their business and on-board these beneficiaries into the formal financial system through bank accounts, mobile wallets and formal identities.

The finding of this study is in line with Odey, Agba, and Kina (2019) who carried out a study on the effect of government small scale and medium enterprise operations on the wellbeing of rural dwellers in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. Findings indicated that there was a correlate between petty trading, artisans work and the wellbeing of rural dwellers. The study recommended among others that government and other agencies should adopt small and medium enterprises as a vital tool for enhancing wellbeing among rural dwellers. Financial assistance should also be given to existing small and medium enterprises in rural areas to expand their operation. For government enterprise and empowerment programme for poverty reduction to survive there is need for the establishment of small and medium enterprise as a strategy for poverty reduction.

Also, Odey, Agba, and Kina (2019) pointed out that, financial assistance should be given to existing small and medium enterprises in rural areas to expand their operations in order to survive. Government enterprise and empowerment programme should be equipped to enhance for poverty reduction. Edom, Egu and Emori (2015) carried out a study on small and medium enterprises for financing and poverty reduction in Nigeria. Findings revealed that there was a significant relationship between small and medium enterprises, financing and poverty reduction in Nigeria. It was therefore concluded that small and medium enterprises financing have a positive relationship with poverty in Nigeria. It was therefore recommended that adequate attention be given to small and medium enterprises through channeling of more resources to the sector. The government should as a matter of urgency diversify the economy and create more jobs for the increasing population to reduce the unemployment rate in the country, thereby reducing poverty among the populace.

Tahira (2016) observes that the transformation agenda of the Jonathan and Sambo led administration had continually made this enterprise one of its poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria. The general notion of government is that small and medium enterprises are catalysts for economic growth and rural development. It is the belief of government that government enterprises and empowerment programmes are essential precondition for eliminating poverty at all levels. Thus, rural dwellers participation in government small and medium enterprises as a vital tool for reducing extreme poverty and improving the socio-economic wellbeing of society becomes critical. Carter (2017) observes that government

small and medium enterprises for economic empowerment have acquired a significant stature in the socioeconomic development of the people.

Ifeanyi, and Ijeoma (2022) investigated a study on the relationship between microfinance credit and alleviation of poverty in Nigeria. The regression result found that there is a significant relationship between microfinance bank and unemployment rate in Nigeria, there was a significant relationship between microfinance bank and capital formation in Nigeria. There was a significant relationship between microfinance bank and per capita income in Nigeria. The study therefore concluded that microfinance credit has the ability of reducing rate of poverty in the country. The study therefore recommended that the Central Bank of Nigeria should regulate and monitor the activities of Microfinance and also administer specialized funds set aside to improve microcredit access at affordable cost, especially SME Credit Guarantee Schemes.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that national home grown school feeding programme and government enterprise and empowerment programme are effective in reducing poverty in Cross River State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, it was recommended that:

1. Government should build a reliable frame work that focus on how school feeding programme can effectively contribute to improving educational outcome and meeting the nutrition and health needs of school age children.
2. The government needs a genuine and sincere political will to diversify the economy that will accommodate the teeming population.

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