

“Blame the Victim” and “Blame the System” factor analysis of Pervasive Poverty in Rural Communities of Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

The study set out to investigate the factors responsible for pervasive poverty in rural communities of Ebonyi State with a view to determining if the scourge of poverty is systemic or attributable to the victims' lack of capacity. The combined activities of Ebonyi State Community Based Poverty Reduction Agency (EB-CPRA) and Ebonyi State Community and Social Development Agency (EB-CSDA) were interrogated to determine why rural poverty has persisted despite government efforts at stemming the tide. The study is a qualitative research; hence, content analytic approach was adopted as methodology. Data were drawn from documentary papers, journal articles, Government/Agency Publications and Operation Manuals, direct observation and use of structured interviews. Findings reveal that, historically, the agencies of government on poverty reduction programmes are highly rated in provision of micro-projects to the beneficiary communities but their approach has been group-targeted rather than on the individual poor and that the pervasive rural poverty in the state is attributable to systemic factors such as poor governance, corruption, insensitivity of government over citizens' socio-economic well-being; hostile business environment; amongst others. The study therefore recommends amongst others that adequate research should be undertaken to understand the demographic characteristics/complexities of the rural communities to enable efforts on poverty reduction be well targeted based on adequate needs assessment of beneficiaries.

Keywords: Pervasive Poverty, Poverty Reduction, Micro-Projects, Rural Communities, Ebonyi State.

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of poverty is generally elusive but a typical poor individual is a person who lacks the capacity to escape from his/her situation by his/her own efforts and who needs the help of the state. This Characteristic is what causes the social conditions of extreme poverty to persist and to be transmitted from one generation to another if the state does not help (Udu, 2018).

Frequently, those most affected by extreme poverty are young children, pregnant women, the elderly, the inhabitants of rural areas and marginalized urban dwellers as well as those groups of people who have not been integrated into the society. Over the years, the wars on poverty have taken divergent dimensions, consuming billions of money; unfortunately, there appear to be very marginal progress so far recorded.

Ebonyi State which has been categorized as one of the poorest states in Nigeria has grappled with the issue of endemic poverty. Considering that the many poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria have not driven from the grassroot, successive governments in Ebonyi State had at one time and the other introduced programmes aimed at stemming the tide of poverty in the state. Such programmes as the Ebonyi Community Poverty Reduction Programme (EB-CPRP) and the Ebonyi Community Social Development Programmes (EB-CSDP) are cases in Point.

Evidently, the issue of poverty is so central to social and economic development of any nation. This is why, governments, and Development Agencies such as the World Bank have risen to tackle it frontally. Unfortunately, there appear to have been poor understanding of the demographic characteristics of rural dwellers and insufficient research sponsored by governments and Development Agencies in this regard resulting unavoidably to a situation where there has been visible mismatch between the community structure and the kind of poverty reduction programme targeted at them. The broad objective of the study therefore, is to investigate the factors responsible for pervasive poverty in the rural communities of Ebonyi State with a view to determining if the scourge of poverty is systemic or attributable to the Victims lack of capacity.

The study shall therefore attempt at providing answers to the followings and related questions-

- (a) What factors are responsible for rural poverty in Ebonyi State?
- (b) Why has rural poverty persisted despite programmes aimed at stemming the tide?
- (c) What are the alternative approaches to poverty reduction in rural communities of Ebonyi State?

The Concept of Poverty

The concept of poverty is elusive to define. Poverty generally means that a household's income is inadequate as judged by a specific standard. The translation of the concept into practical terms produces technical as well as ideological debate. Even defining household is not simple. The income dimension of poverty defines poverty as a situation of low income or low consumption. This has been used for constructing poverty lines.

Accordingly, people are counted poor when their standard of living in terms of income or consumption is below the poverty line. Thus, the poverty line is a measure that separates the poor from the “non-poor”. However, poverty has both income and non income dimension usually intertwined. For example, scholars have described the poor as those who are unable to obtain an “income, find a stable job, own property or those who are unable to obtain an adequate income, find a stable job, own property or maintain healthy conditions. They also lack an adequate level of education and cannot satisfy their basic health needs” (Sancho 1996) cited in (Abah 2005). Thus, the poor are often illiterates, in poor health, and may have short life span. They have no (or limited) access to basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, decent shelter,, are unable to meet social and economic obligations, lack skills and gainful employment, have few, if any economic assets, and sometimes lack self-esteem (Olayemi 1995 cited in Udu, 2018).

Poverty has been defined in many ways. These include, lack of power, shortage of money and having self-defeating attitudes and lifestyle. Poverty defies objective definition because of its multi-dimension nature. There is yet, no universally accepted definition of poverty. There is always the difficulty in deciding where to draw the line between the poor and the “non-poor”.

Nwalu (2010) writes that discussion on poverty problems and progress in its alleviation had often been affected by the choice of its definition. This is as a result of definitional quarrels that abound among social and management science researchers which has made poverty to be approached with dissimilar views on its nature, appropriate methods of its alleviation and the effect of past economic and social conditions as well as government policies on the poor.

Onah (2010), averred that poverty has deprived a good number of Nigerians the prestige of citizenship. He added that the less privileged, the unemployed and the landless peasant are not given access to bank facilities as a result of the collateral barrier, which has been placed above their affordable capability. Basic education, good water, good environment and health care are being made for a class, as those who are within the enclave of poverty are not opportune to afford them. Against the background of economic perspective of poverty, researchers have argued that the economic definition of poverty is inadequate because of its failure to incorporate such issues like social, political, religious and psychological aspect of the poor. Hence, it should be understood that the poor both as individuals and a group possess social and psychological characteristics that may or may not be associated with lack of economic resource. These social and psychological traits can to a great extent affect them even if their economic problems are alleviated. Studies directed at explaining the multi-dimension and multifarious ramifications of poverty abound (Addision & Demery, 1985; Atkinson, 1989; Schicler, 2002; Sen. 1999; Harrison & Hunrinton, 2000). Poverty indeed, destroys aspirations, hope and happiness. In Nigeria as in other poverty stricken nations, poverty can be felt as affecting the level of people's tolerance of others, support of civil liberty, and aggression towards foreigners as well as one's disposition to participate in community activities, inter-personal trust, and self satisfaction (Fair Black, 2000 in Udu & Nwofoke, 2018).

Ebonyi State Poverty Status

Poverty in Ebonyi State is a pervasive issue characterized by low levels of income and social deprivation. The Federal Office of Statistics reports that 52.6 per cent Ebonyi State in general 10 and worse for the poor (EB-CPRA, 2009). Indicators of poverty are glaring everywhere in the state and manifest in worsening severity despite the vast human and natural resources, and the economic development potentials Ebonyi State is endowed with. A direct effect of poverty can be seen in virtual lack of such basic infrastructure and socio-economic amenities as good road network, health facilities, schools, portable water supply, etc. Overt poverty shows up among the malnourished population, particularly among vulnerable groups, most often women and children.

Unemployment rate is acute, particularly in the rural areas where over 70 per cent of the population lives. In the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP (2002) Human Development Report, Enugu and Ebonyi “ranked low (0.466) in the Human Development Index (HDI); a combined measure of longevity (physical health, knowledge (education)”, and income (purchasing power). This low expectancy is attributed to life expectancy at birth which is estimated to be below 59.2 years for male and 60.7 years for female. Mortality rate for children under 5 is 191 per 1000 life births” (UNICEF Report, 1994). One-third of the state population is still without safe water and sanitation. Approximately, half of the population of rural dwellers obtains water from rivers. There is also high level of illiteracy (Udu, 2009, Nkwede, 2014; Odo, 2020).

Theoretical Underpinning

The study is anchored on the “Blame the Victim” and “Blame the system” theory of poverty. The blame the victim otherwise known as the individualism, culture/pathological causes of poverty asserts that poverty is an individual phenomenon. The proponents such as Ryan contend that it is laziness, lack of education, ignorance that makes people poor and, such victims are often inferior in some respects.

This proposition seems to suggest that impoverished people are basically the same people every year and if this is to be true, it implies that poverty can be wiped out by assisting particular poor people figure things out and extricate themselves from poverty situations; hence, a paternalistic poverty reduction programme, vigorously pursued can translate to a dramatic reduction of poverty.

The individualistic and the pathological poverty theories explain and belame the individual for being engulfed in poverty but fails to recognize that those factors Per Se, cannot lead to poverty but can at best serve to provide a causal links that may actually trigger and enhance factors that can push an individual into poverty.

Similarly, the cultural theory of poverty explains the persistence of poverty as emanating from culture of poverty. The writings of Oscar Lewis and Oliver La Forge (1959 in Udu and Nkwede, 2018); popularized this thought process in their study of poor Latin American families where they tried to explain the similarities between lower class families in Mexico and Puerto Rico. The culture of poverty presupposes that the poor has unique behavioural patterns and priorities of value which distinguishes them and these unique characteristics often result in trapping them by poverty.

In otherwords, there are sets of values which are intergenerationally transmitted through the process of socialization which invariably tantamount to sub-culture determinants of the lower socio-economic status of the poor leading to a sort of vicious cycle of poverty which only a few can disentangle themselves from.

This theory is critical in assisting academics and development agents to understand the influence of culture on development. Interestingly, it equally gives a clue to how poverty can best be tackled by changing the value system and motivations in a society.

Accordingly, people are poor because their values are embedded in personality traits acquired through process of socialization. It became imperative therefore, that to tackle poverty in such environmental setting, their values/motivation must be completely overhauled and refreshed with new ones.

The foregoing usefulness of the culture of poverty theory notwithstanding, it’s basic flaws lies in the fact that it’s application is limited to developing countries as noted by Oscar Lewis (1959). The theory lacks evidence because poverty exists both in developing as well as in developed societies. For instance, Charles and Betty Lou Valentine in their study of low income earners in America did not find an evidence of existing culture of poverty among the people (Kamil, 2018).

Be that as it may, the culture of poverty theory is indeed useful in understanding poverty of individual as well as community levels in Ebonyi State and beyond. There is no doubts that many governments in Nigeria and particularly Ebonyi State lack the culture of political will, but are engulfed in unbridled corruption, poor programme initiation/implementation which constitute the bane to poverty reduction and this has contained to result to a vicious cycle of poverty with its attendant negative repercussions on socio-economic development of the populace while sustaining pervasive poverty in our rural communities.

From the “Blame the system” theory also known as structural perspective of poverty, the poor manifests certain behavioural patterns which are not generated internally as a result of their unique values but their actions, reactions and inactions are influenced by external factors emanating from an unfavourable, restrictive social structure in which they find themselves. In other words, people are poor not necessarily because of their internalized dominant values but due to a restrictive/unfair socio-economic structures which deprive them of the opportunities to disentangle themselves from poverty situation no matter their efforts at trying to do so. It goes without saying that people’s chances, progress and achievements in life are often determined by the social forces of the environments that surround them. For instance, economic growth, labour, market opportunities and educational facilities in a country provide a framework in which standard of living as well as social relations of people are always created and recreated (Kamil, 2018). Thus, the inherent structures in a society coupled with social relations organization such as race, gender, class and power, invariably determines the people’s fate; hence, poverty is attributable to structural failures/defects in a society.

Kamil (2018), went further to buttress the above argument by contending that failures resulting from government policies/programmes can also result in poverty through cuts in government spending, taxes as well as inefficiencies and corruption in administration.

The “Blame the victim (individualism, cultural and pathological) theory and the “Blame the system (structural theory of poverty) is relevant to this study in a number of respects. Viewed from the individual level in any Nigerian state particularly the rural communities of Ebonyi State, poverty may be attributed to laziness, lack of focus, lack of education, ignorance and inferiority in some respects which invariably can be blamed on the unfair system, poor and exploitative governance, corruption, lack of promotion, delayed salary payments, multiple taxation resulting to hostile business environment, poor programme articulation/implementation,

political rigmarole amongst others which has assumed a prevalent status particularly in the Umahi administration in Ebonyi State.

Historicing War Against Poverty in Ebonyi State

As a result of the extent of poverty and socio-economic deprivation among Ebonyi people, the state government had embarked on various poverty reduction programmes in Ebonyi State over the years.

First, in May 1997 an agreement was reached for Development Corporation between the UNDP and Ebonyi State government.

The programme essentially bordered on provision of micro-credit to groups and co-operative societies from communities in the state. The micro-credit scheme was designed for intervention at the state and local government and community levels which sole objective was to create a pool of resources to be used as a revolving fund so as to provide the credit requirements of the beneficiary communities/group. The UNDP document stated that the credit ceiling to any beneficiary group is N2,500,000 which actual amount of the loan is determined by an adequate assessment of the investments concerned, particularly the nature of the venture, the viability of the proposal, cash flow and business plan (Abah, 2005).

Record has is that as 31st March, 2003, the UNDP through its micro-credit scheme, has disbursed an amount totaling N9,950,000 to community groups in Ebonyi State. The UNDP made some remarkable impacts in community skills development resulting to improvement in indigenous technology, youths empowerment, stimulation of commercial activities and ultimately improved standard of living at the community levels. Be that as it may, the UNDP micro-credit scheme was based on a ‘top-bottom’ approach; hence, did not originate from the people. Similarly, provision of credit was directed to groups rather than to the individual poor. Group initiative can undermine personal choices and preferences which is often on real need of beneficiary. As a result of the observed flaw in the above approach, the Ebonyi State government on 23rd August, 2005, set up the Ebonyi State Community-Based Poverty Reduction Agency (EB-CPRA); with the mandate to select, appraise and finance the implementation of micro-projects which will: (i) support the rehabilitation and development of basic social and economic infrastructure, critical to the improvement and development of the economic and social conditions of the population, especially in the rural communities and poverty stricken areas of Ebonyi State; and (ii) improve the income earning capacity of poor people and household (Udu, 2014).

Clearly, EB-CPRA Approach was to be particularly, demand-driven, well targeted and originating from the beneficiaries. Accordingly, its micro-projects were to be identified; selected and implemented by the agency in collaboration with the beneficiary communities. EB-CPRA is rated high. Its success in the state may be ascribed to: autonomous in implementing its projects and the fact that gave room for the involvement of civil society as board members; an improved motivation of the staff who were paid private sector salaries; and above all, the fact that there were no undue external interferences basically from politicians because, the projects were perceived to be autonomous from the State (Udu, 2014).

Be that as it may, in 2007, a harmonization policy that saw the Empowerment and Environment Management Project (LEEMP) and Community Based Poverty Reduction Projects (CPRP) merged as a social development approach, and this resulted to the Ebonyi State Community and Social Development Agency (EB-CSDA) whose mandate was to support communities and local government authorities for increased access of the poor to improved social and natural resources infrastructure services. The tables below show the extents the programmes/agencies have tackled poverty reduction in Ebonyi State (Njoku, 2019).

Table 1: Summary of EB-CPRA Micro-Projects in LGAs of Ebonyi State (1st – 6th Batches)

S/N	LGA(s)	Senatorial	Nos of Project	Approval	% share of total
1	Abakaliki	Ebonyi North	9	28,960,500	7.84
2	Ebonyi	Ebonyi North	12	26,925,820	7.29
3	Ohaukwu	Ebonyi North	34	91,479,042	24.78
4	Afikpo North	South	30	57,971,253	15.70
5	Onicha	South	6	18,805,780	5.09
6	Ivo	South	22	30,638,438	8.33
7	Ezza South	Central	7	30,740,750	8.30
8	Ishielu	Central	13	43,357,410	11.74
9	Ikwo	Central	15	40,352,249	10.93

Source: Field Survey, (Udu, 2009 in Udu, et al (2018)

Table 2: Disbursement to micro-projects by LGAs as at 31st December, 2013

S/N	LGA	No of communities funded	Nos of Project	Approval
1	Abakaliki	12	96,901,936.10	9.95
2	Afikpo North	07	54,012,588.60	5.54
3	Afikpo South	08	60,652,275.24	6.23
4	Ebonyi	08	74,951,662.80	7.70
5	Ezza North	07	66,252,256.50	6.80
6	Ezza south	08	82,125,932.20	8.43

7	Ikwo	10	88,358,673.49	9.07
8	Ishielu	07	61,070,211.29	6.27
9	Ivo	04	32,867,253.40	3.37
10	Izzi	10	98,528,883.70	10.12
11	Ohaozara	10	96,856,231.30	9.95
12	Ohaukwu	13	116,609,993.99	11.98
13	Onicha	06	44,075,331.00	4.52
Total		110	973,258,229.61	100

Source: EB-CSDA (2003 in Udu, 2018)

Tables: 3-15 show lists of micro-projects their locations and status of EB-CSDA in the 13 Local Government Areas of Ebonyi State as at 2018; as captured by EB-CSDA Progress report (2019) cited in Emeka-Njoku (2019).

Table: 3 ABAKALIKI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

S/ N	MICRO-PROJECT LOCATION (COMMUNITY)	S/ N	MICRO-PROJECT TITLES	SECTOR	TOTAL MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT	BREAK DOWN OF MICRO PROJECT AMOUNT ₦	
						AGENC 90%	COMMUNIT 10%
					₦		
01	Agbaja-Unuhu	01	Construction of Health Centre with equipment	Health	8,045,000.00	7,240,500.00	804,500.00
		02	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole (3Nos)	Water	1,950,000.00	1,755,000.00	195,000.00
02	Ephuenyim	03	Construction of Town Hall	Socio-Economic	7,707,700.00	6,936,930.00	770,770.00
		04	Extension of Electricity	Electricity	2,250,000.00	2,025,000.00	225,000.00
03	Ndiebor Amachi	05	Extension of Electricity with a Transformer	Electricity	7,770,000.00	6,993,000.00	777,000.00
		06	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole (3nos)	Water	1,950,000.00	1,755,000.00	195,000.00
04	Ndiechi Amachi	07	Extension of Electricity with a Transformer	Electricity	8,700,000.00	7,830,000.00	870,000.00
		08	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole (2nos)	Water	1,300,000.00	1,170,000.00	130,000.00
05	Ndiegu- Amachi	09	Completion of Civic Centre	Socio-Economics	9,350,000.00	8,415,000.00	935,000.00
		10	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole (Inos)	Water	650,000.00	585,000.00	65,000.00
06	Ndudara	11	Construction of Double Cell Mini-Bridge	Transport	8,700,000.00	7,830,000.00	870,000.00
		12	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Boreholes (2Nos)	Water	1,300,000.00	1,170,000.00	130,000.00
07	Omakorjie	13	Construction of a Primary School 6-Classroom Block	Education	6,274,500.00	5,647,050.00	627,450.00
		14	Construction of Mini-Bridge and Grading of Road	Transport	3,716,000.00	3,344,400.00	371,600.00
Total					69,663,200.00	62,696,880.00	6,966,320.00

Table: 4 AFIKPO NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS

“Blame the Victim” and “Blame the System” factor analysis of Pervasive Poverty in ..

S/N	MICRO-PROJECT LOCATION (COMMUNITY)	S/N	MICRO-PROJECT TITLES	SECTOR	TOTAL MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT	BREAKDOWN OF MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT ₦	
					₦	AGENCY 90%	COMMUNITY 10%
01	Akpoha	01	Construction of 2 Blocks of Lock-up Stall of 20 Units each	Socio-Economic	6,872,480.00	6,185,232.00	687,248.00
		02	Rehabilitation of Existing Bridge	Transport	3,076,800.00	2,769,120.00	307,680.00
		03	Upgrading to a Motorized Borehole	Water	1,500,774.00	1,350,696.60	150,077.40
		04	Construction of Rest House	Socio-Economic	1,198,170.00	1,078,353.00	119,817.00
02	Amaokwe-Ezeke	05	Construction of Culvert & Concrete Overlay	Transport	3,500,525.00	3,150,472.50	350,052.50
		06	Construction of Skill Acquisition Centre	Socio-Economic	3,800,000.00	3,420,000.00	380,000.00
03	Amata-Akpoha	07	Rehabilitation of Road	Transport	8,500,000.00	7,650,000.00	850,000.00
		08	Drilling of a Motorized Water Borehole	Water	1,500,000.00	1,350,000.00	150,000.00
04	Ibii-Ozizza	09	Construction of Civic Centre	Socio-Economic	8,717,590.00	7,845,831.00	871,759.00
		10	Road Rehabilitation	Transport	1,277,410.00	1,149,669.00	127,741.00
05	Ndukwe	11	Construction of Motorized Borehole (2Nos)	Water	3,845,000.00	3,460,500.00	384,500.00
		12	Construction of Civic Centre	Socio-Economic	6,075,000.00	5,467,500.00	607,500.00
06	Ngodo	13	Construction of Civic Centre	Socio-Economic	8,009,000.00	7,208,100.00	800,900.00
		14	Construction of VIP Toilet	Environment	1,971,000.00	1,773,900.00	197,100.00
07	Ohaisu	15	Construction of Civic Centre	Socio-Economic	3,299,000.00	2,969,100.00	329,900.00
		16	Completion of Market Stalls	Socio-Economic	3,333,178.00	2,999,860.20	333,317.80
08	Opi Amasiri	17	Road Rehabilitation	Transport	3,367,822.00	3,031,039.80	336,782.20
		18	Construction of Town Hall	Socio-Economic	7,500,000.00	6,750,000.00	750,000.00
09	Unwana	19	Grading of 2.2km Farm Road with a Ring Culvert	Transport	2,500,000.00	2,250,000.00	250,000.00
		20	Grading & Lateriting of 500m Road with Mini Bridge and Ring Culvert	Transport	6,673,000.00	6,005,700.00	667,300.00
		21	Drilling of Motorized Borehole (2nos) with 2000 litres Overhead Tank	Water	3,327,000.00	2,994,300.00	332,700.00
Total					89,843,749.00	80,859,374.10	8,984,374.90

Table: 5 AFIKPO SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

S/N	MICRO-PROJECT LOCATION (COMMUNITY)	S/N	MICRO-PROJECT TITLES	SECTOR	TOTAL MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT	BREAKDOWN OF MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT ₦	
					₦	AGENCY 90%	COMMUNITY 10%
01	Amangwu-Edda	01	Grading of 6km Road & Construction of Culvert (8Nos)	Transport	7,533,000.00	6,779,700.00	753,300.00
		02	Grading of 6km Farm Road	Transport	1,175,000.00	1,057,500.00	117,500.00
		03	Extension of Electricity	Electricity	1,291,000.00	1,161,900.00	129,100.00
02	Amato	04	Renovation of a Town Hall	Socio-Economic	3,100,000.00	2,790,000.00	310,000.00
		05	Construction of a Health Centre and Procurement of Basic Health Equipment and Drags of (N50,000)	Health	6,900,000.00	6,210,000.00	690,000.00
03	Eburwana	06	Renovation of Sec. Sch. Science Laboratory	Education	6,118,730.00	5,506,857.00	611,873.00
		07	Equipping of Health Centre	Health	3,756,720.00	3,381,048.00	375,672.00
04	Umunna	08	Construction of Civic Centre	Socio-Economic	7,995,000.00	7,195,500.00	799,500.00
		09	Grading of 800m Earth Road	Transport	2,000,000.00	1,800,000.00	200,000.00
Total					39,869,450.00	35,882,505.00	3,986,945.00

Table: 6 EBONYI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

S/N	MICRO-PROJECT LOCATION (COMMUNITY)	S/N	MICRO-PROJECT TITLES	SECTOR	TOTAL MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT	BREAKDOWN OF MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT ₦	
					₦	AGENCY 90%	COMMUNITY 10%
01	Aboffia	01	Construction of Town Hall	Socio-Economic	8,905,950.00	8,015,355.00	890,595.00
		02	Extension of Electricity	Electricity	1,050,450.00	945,405.00	105,045.00
02	Agalegu-Ishieke	03	Extension of Electricity with 300KVA Transformer	Electricity	9,350,000.00	8,415,000.00	935,000.00
		04	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole (2Nos)	Water	650,000.00	585,000.00	65,000.00
03	Ede- Ogbala	05	Construction of Bridge	Transport	9,335,000.00	8,401,500.00	933,500.00
		06	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole (2Nos)	Water	650,000.00	585,000.00	65,000.00
04	Ishieke	07	Construction of 6-Classroom Block with Principal's Office	Education	8,700,250.00	7,830,225.00	870,025.00
		08	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole (8Nos)	Water	650,000.00	585,000.00	65,000.00
05	Mbeke Ishieke	09	Grading of 14km Farm Road with (4nos) Ring Culvert of 600mm Diameter	Transport	8,700,000.00	7,830,000.00	870,000.00
		10	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole (2no)	Water	1,300,000.00	1,170,000.00	130,000.00
06	Nkaleke-Echara	11	Extension of Electricity	Electricity	9,253,400.00	8,328,060.00	925,340.00
		12	Grading of Road and Constitution of a Culvert	Transport	664,000.00	597,600.00	66,400.00
07	Nkaleke-Echara Ndicbor	13	Extension of Electricity with 300KVA Transformer	Electricity	8,500,000.00	7,650,000.00	850,000.00
		14	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Boreholes (2Nos)	Water	1,300,000.00	1,170,000.00	130,000.00
08	Nkaleke-Echara Ndiegu	15	Extension of Electricity with 300KVA Transformer	Electricity	8,685,000.00	7,816,500.00	868,500.00
		16	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Boreholes (2Nos)	Water	1,300,000.00	1,170,000.00	130,000.00
09	Nkaleke-Echara Unuliu	17	Extension of Electricity with 300KVA Transformer	Electricity	9,350,000.00	8,415,000.00	935,000.00
		18	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole	Water	650,000.00	585,000.00	65,000.00
10	Oguzoronweya	19	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Boreholes (8Nos)	Water	5,200,000.00	4,680,000.00	520,000.00
		20	Construction of Box Culverts (5Nos)	Transport	4,785,250.00	4,306,725.00	478,525.00
Total					98,979,300.00	89,081,370.00	9,897,930.00

Table: 7 EZZA NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

S/ N	MICRO- PROJECT LOCATION (COMMUNITY)	S/N	MICRO-PROJECT TITLES	SECTOR	TOTAL MICRO- PROJECT AMOUNT ₦	BREAKDOWN OF MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT ₦	
						AGENCY 90%	COMMUNI TY 10%
01	Nkomoro	01	Extension of Electricity with Installation of 300KVA Transformer owned by Community	Electricity	8,697,500.00	7,827,750.00	869,750.00
		02	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Boreholes (2nos)	Water	1,300,000.00	1,170,000.00	130,000.00
02	Ogboji	03	Construction of Town Hall	Socio-Economic	6,400,000.00	5,760,000.00	640,000.00
		04	Extension of Electricity with 3 OOKVA Transformer	Electricity	3,600,000.00	3,240,000.00	360,000.00
03	Okaleru	05	Construction of 2 Mini Bridges	Transport	8,700,000.00	7,830,000.00	870,000.00
		06	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole (2Nos)	Water	1,300,000.00	1,170,000.00	130,000.00
04	Oshiegbe	07	Construction of 3 Blocks of Open Market Stall of 20 unit each & VIP Toilet for Male & Female	Socio-Economic	7,600,000.00	6,840,000.00	760,000.00
		08	Extension of Electricity	Electricity	2,351,000.00	2,115,900.00	235,100.00
05	Umuezekoha	09	Extension of Electricity	Electricity	9,800,000.00	8,820,000.00	980,000.00
		10	Renovation of Sec School 4-Classroom Block	Education	200,000.00	180,000.00	20,000.00
06	Ekwetekwe/Ogbuinyagu	11	Extension of Electricity with 3 OOKVA Transformer	Electricity	9,159,900.00	8,243,910.00	915,990.00
		12	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole	Water	650,000.00	585,000.00	65,000.00
07	Oriuzor	13	Extension of Electricity with 3 OOKVA Transformer	Electricity	9,250,600.00	8,325,540.00	925,060.00
		14	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole	Water	650,000.00	585,000.00	65,000.00
08	Umuezeoka	15	Extension of Electricity with 300KVA Transformer	Electricity	8,949,100.00	8,054,190.00	894,910.00
		16	Construction of 900mm Double Cell Ring Culvert	Transport	1,038,000.00	934,200.00	103,800.00
Total					79,646,100.00	71,681,490.00	7,964,610.00

Table: 8 EZZA SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

S/ N	MICRO- PROJECT LOCATION (COMMUNITY)	S/N	MICRO-PROJECT TITLES	SECTOR	TOTAL MICRO- PROJECT AMOUNT ₦	BREAK DOWN OF MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT ₦	
						AGENCY 90%	COMMUNI TY 10%
01	Amagu Ezza	01	Extension of Electricity	Electricity	7,997,250.00	7,197,525.00	799,725.00
		02	Construction of Open Market Stalls (20 nos)	Socio-Economic	2,000,000.00	1,800,000.00	200,000.00
02	Amudo	03	Extension of Electricity with LT span of 1.4Km	Electricity	1,900,000.00	1,710,000.00	190,000.00
		04	Construction of a Town Hall	Socio-Economic	8,050,000.00	7,245,000.00	805,000.00
03	Ihotor	05	Construction of Mini-Bridge	Transport	9,250,000.00	8,325,000.00	925,000.00
		06	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole	Water	650,000.00	585,000.00	65,000.00
04	Ikwuato-Idembia	07	Completion of Sec. Sch. 4-Classroom Block	Education	4,000,000.00	3,600,000.00	400,000.00
		08	Extension of Electricity with LT span of 2.25Km	Electricity	6,000,000.00	5,400,000.00	600,000.00
05	Ndufu Amalekwuna Ameka	09	Extension of Electricity (2km)	Electricity	4,452,000.00	4,006,800.00	445,200.00
		10	Construction of Health Centre with Basic Equipment	Health	5,500,000.00	4,950,000.00	550,000.00
06	Okoffia	11	Construction of a Box Culvert of 3m x 3m x 10m	Transport	8,543,000.00	7,688,700.00	854,300.00
		12	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole (2nos)	Water	1,300,000.00	1,170,000.00	130,000.00
Total					59,642,250.00	53,678,025.00	5,964,225.00

Table: 9 IKWO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

S/N	MICRO-PROJECT LOCATION (COMMUNITY)	S/N	MICRO-PROJECT TITLES	SECTOR	TOTAL MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT ₦	BREAKDOWN OF MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT ₦	
						AGENCY 90%	COMMUNITY 10%
01	Echi-Alike	01	Rehabilitation of Pond (2Nos)	Water	3,204,500.00	2,884,050.00	320,450.00
		02	Extension of Electricity with 300KVA Transformer	Electricity	6,790,050.00	6,111,045.00	679,005.00
02	Ekpa-omaka	03	Extension of Electricity with 300KVA Transformer	Electricity	8,696,000.00	7,826,400.00	869,600.00
		04	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Boreholes (2Nos)	Water	1,300,000.00	1,170,000.00	130,000.00
03	Enyibuchiri	05	Construction of Double Cell Mini-Bridge	Transport	7,021,700.00	6,319,530.00	702,170.00
		06	Construction of Pond	Water	2,958,300.00	2,662,470.00	295,830.00
04	Ettam-Okpuitumo	07	Extension of Electricity with 300KVA Transformer	Electricity	9,000,000.00	8,100,000.00	900,000.00
		08	Grading of 4.1 Km Farm Road	Transport	1,000,000.00	900,000.00	100,000.00
05	Ndegu-Echara	09	Extension of Electricity with Installation of 2 of 300KVA Transformers owned by Community	Electricity	4,995,000.00	4,495,500.00	499,500.00
		10	Grading of 2.2Km with Ring Culvert	Transport	5,005,000.00	4,504,500.00	500,500.00
06	Ndufu Alike	11	Construction of 3 Blocks of Open Market Stall of 20 Units each, etc.	Socio-Economic	7,200,000.00	6,480,000.00	720,000.00
		12	Construction of Mini Bridge	Transport	2,700,000.00	2,430,000.00	270,000.00
07	Ndufu Igbudu	13	Extension of Electricity	Electricity	9,000,000.00	8,100,000.00	900,000.00
		14	Construction of a Box Culvert of 8m x 1.5 x 1.5m Size	Transport	966,000.00	869,400.00	96,600.00
08	Ndufu-Amagu	15	Extension of Electricity with 300KVA Transformer	Electricity	9,300,000.00	8,370,000.00	930,000.00
		16	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole	Water	650,000.00	585,000.00	65,000.00
09	Ndufu Echara	17	Extension of Electricity	Electricity	9,485,500.00	8,536,950.00	948,550.00
		18	Construction of Culvert	Transport	474,500.00	427,050.00	47,450.00
Total					89,746,550.00	80,771,895.00	8,974,655.00

Table: 10 ISHIELU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

S/N	MICRO-PROJECT LOCATION (COMMUNITY)	S/N	MICRO-PROJECT TITLES	SECTOR	TOTAL MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT ₦	BREAKDOWN OF MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT ₦	
						AGENCY 90%	COMMUNITY 10%
01	Ezillo	01	Construction of Secondary School 6-classroom Block	Education	7,800,000.00	7,020,000.00	780,000.00
		02	Construction of 3 units VIP Toilet of 4 compartment each	Environment	2,199,600.00	1,979,640.00	219,960.00
02	Ezza Umuahali	03	Construction of Civic Centre	Socio-Economic	8,015,000.00	7,213,500.00	801,500.00
		04	Pond Rehabilitation	Water	1,985,000.00	1,786,500.00	198,500.00
03	lyonu	05	Construction of Town Hall	Socio-Economic	8,200,000.00	7,380,000.00	820,000.00
		06	Construction of Culvert	Transport	1,750,000.00	1,575,000.00	175,000.00
04	Nkalagu	07	Extension of Electricity	Electricity	8,488,650.00	7,639,785.00	848,865.00
		08	Construction of Primary. School Headmaster's office	Education	1,506,350.00	1,355,715.00	150,635.00
05	Okpoto	09	Extension of Electricity with 500KVA Transformer	Electricity	8,100,000.00	7,290,000.00	810,000.00
		10	Grading of 6km Farm Road	Transport	1,900,000.00	1,710,000.00	190,000.00
Total					49,944,600.00	44,950,140.00	4,994,460.00

Table: 11 IVO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

S/N	MICRO-PROJECT LOCATION (COMMUNITY)	S/N	SECTOR	TOTAL MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT	BREAKDOWN OF MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT ₦		
					AGENCY 90%	COMMUNITY 10%	
				₦			
01	Akaeze	01	Construction of Primary school 4-Classroom Block with Headmaster's office	Education	4,800,000.00	4,320,000.00	480,000.00
		02	Completion of Civic Centre	Socio-Economic	2,330,080.00	2,097,072.00	233,008.00
		03	Completion of 14 Units Open Market Stall	Socio-Economic	2,869,920.00	2,582,928.00	286,992.00
02	Okue	04	Construction and Fencing of Two Bedroom Hospital Staff Quarters	Health	8,500,000.00	7,650,000.00	850,000.00
		05	Extension of Electricity	Electricity	1,040,175.00	936,157.50	104,017.50
Total					19,540,175.00	17,586,157.50	1,954,017.50

Table: 12 IZZI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

S/N	MICRO-PROJECT LOCATION (COMMUNITY)	S/N	MICRO-PROJECT TITLES	SECTOR	TOTAL MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT	BREAKDOWN OF MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT ₦	
						AGENCY 90%	COMMUNITY 10%
					₦		
01	Igbeagu	01	Extension of Electricity	Electricity	7,755,100.00	6,979,590.00	775,510.00
		02	Construction of a Box Culvert	Transport	2,220,000.00	1,998,000.00	222,000.00
02	Mkpuma-Akpatakpa	03	Extension of Electricity with 300KVA Transformer	Electricity	9,500,000.00	8,550,000.00	950,000.00
		04	Construction of a Culvert	Transport	500,000.00	450,000.00	50,000.00
03	Ndiadza Ndieze	05	Extension of Electricity (2.75km)	Electricity	5,692,000.00	5,122,800.00	569,200.00
		06	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole (3 nos.)	Water	1,950,000.00	1,755,000.00	195,000.00
		07	Grading of 3.5km Farm Road and 600mm Square Culvert	Transport	2,100,000.00	1,890,000.00	210,000.00
04	Ndiechi-Ezzainyimagu	08	Extension of Electricity with LT span of 8.6km	Electricity	9,000,000.00	8,100,000.00	900,000.00
		09	Grading of 2km Farm Road	Transport	1,000,000.00	900,000.00	100,000.00
05	Oferekpe Agbaja	10	Extension of Electricity	Electricity	9,347,440.00	8,412,696.00	934,744.00
		11	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole (Ino)	Water	650,000.00	585,000.00	65,000.00
Total							4,971,454.00

Table: 13 OHAOZARA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

“Blame the Victim” and “Blame the System” factor analysis of Pervasive Poverty in ..

S/N	MICRO-PROJECT LOCATION (COMMUNITY)	S/N	MICRO-PROJECT TITLES	SECTOR	TOTAL MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT	BREAKDOWN OF MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT ₦	
						₦	AGENCY 90%
01	Amem-Ubiiru	01	Construction of Civic Centre	Socio-Economic	9,350,000.00		935,000.00
		02	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole	Water	650,000.00	585,000.00	65,000.00
02	Kni-Uburu	03	Construction of Town Hall	Socio-Economic	9,340,000.00		934,000.00
		04	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole	Water	650,000.00	585,000.00	65,000.00
03	Mebi-Owa	05	Construction of Town Hall	Socio-Economic	7,795,600.00		779,560.00
		06	Extension of Electricity	Electricity	2,204,000.00	1,983,600.00	220,400.00
04	Mgbom-Ugwulangwu	07	Construction of Lock-up shops (3 Blocks of 10 Units each)	Socio-Economic	7,399,190.00		739,919.00
		08	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Boreholes (4Nos)	Water	2,600,000.00	2,340,000.00	260,000.00
05	Ogwu Etiti	09	Completion of Town Hall	Socio-Economic	8,587,000.00		858,700.00
		10	Extension of Electricity	Electricity	1,321,760.00	1,189,584.00	132,176.00
06	Okposi -Okwu	11	Extension of Electricity	Electricity	9,251,800.00		925,180.00
		12	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole (Ino)	Water	650,000.00	585,000.00	65,000.00
07	Uburu	13	Construction of Six Blocks of Market Stall	Socio-Economic	4,500,000.00		450,000.00
		14	Farm Road with Box Culvert	Transport	5,800,000.00	5,220,000.00	580,000.00
08	Ugwulangwu	15	Construction of 2-Blocks of Open Market Stalls of 10 Units each	Socio-Economic	8,000,000.00		800,000.00
		16	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Boreholes (3Nos)	Water	1,950,000.00	1,755,000.00	195,000.00
09	Umuakuma	17	Construction of Civic Centre	Socio-Economic	7,150,000.00		715,000.00
		18	Construction of Mini Bridge	Transport	2,800,000.00	2,520,000.00	280,000.00
10	Umuka	19	Extension of Electricity with 300KVA Transformer	Electricity	3,000,000.00		300,000.00
		20	Construction of Town Hall	Socio-Economic	7,000,000.00	6,300,000.00	700,000.00
Total					99,999,350.00	89,999,415.00	9,999,935.00

Table: 14 OHAUKWU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

S/N	MICRO-PROJECT LOCATION (COMMUNITY)	S/N	MICRO-PROJECT TITLES	SECTOR	TOTAL MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT	BREAKDOWN OF MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT ₦	
						₦	AGENCY 90%
01	Ameku Okposhi	01	Extension of Electricity	Electricity	6,096,400.00		609,640.00
		02	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole (5nos)	Water	3,326,000.00	2,993,400.00	332,600.00
02	Effium	03	Grading of Farm Road 4.5km with Ring Culvert (3nos)	Transport	5,300,000.00		530,000.00
		04	Extension of Electricity	Electricity	4,700,000.00	4,230,000.00	470,000.00
03	Ishielu	05	Construction of Town Hall	Socio-Economic	8,348,000.00		834,800.00
		06	Extension of Electricity	Electricity	1,500,000.00	1,350,000.00	150,000.00
04	Nkpoikwe-Okposhi Eshi	07	Extension of Electricity with 300KVA Transformer	Electricity	5,251,700.00		525,170.00
		08	Construction of Town Hall With Lock-up shop (5Nos)	Socio-Economic	3,448,000.00	3,103,200.00	344,800.00
05	Ukwagba	09	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Boreholes (2Nos)	Water	1,300,000.00	1,170,000.00	130,000.00
		10	Extension of Electricity with 300KVA Transformer	Electricity	8,009,300.00	7,208,370.00	800,930.00
06	Umuakpu	11	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Boreholes (3Nos)	Water	1,950,000.00	1,755,000.00	195,000.00
		12	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Boreholes	Water	7,800,000.00	7,020,000.00	780,000.00
07	Umuogudu-Akpu	13	Extension of Electricity	Electricity	2,200,000.00	1,980,000.00	220,000.00
		14	Construction of Secondary School Examination Hall	Education	7,041,471.00	6,337,323.90	704,147.10
		15	Construction of a Box Culvert	Transport	2,957,929.00	2,662,136.10	295,792.90
Total					69,228,800.00	62,305,920.00	6,922,880.00

Table : 15 ONICHA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

S/N	MICRO-PROJECT LOCATION (COMMUNITY)	S/N	MICRO-PROJECT TITLES	SECTOR	TOTAL MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT	BREAKDOWN OF MICRO-PROJECT AMOUNT ₦	
						AGENCY	COMMUNITY
						90%	10%
01	Igboeze Onicha	01	Extension of Electricity	Electricity	8,600,000.00	7,740,000.00	860,000.00
		02	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole (2nos)	Water	1,300,000.00	1,170,000.00	130,000.00
02	Ishinkwo	03	Grading of Farm Road with 900mm Ring Culvert (5nos) & 600mm Ring Culvert (2nos)	Transport	8,655,000.00	7,789,500.00	865,500.00
		04	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole (2nos)	Water	1,300,000.00	1,170,000.00	130,000.00
03	Ochege Ukawu	05	Extension of Electricity with 300KVA Transformer	Electricity	7,490,000.00	6,741,000.00	749,000.00
		06	Grading of 4.7km Farm Road	Transport	2,500,000.00	2,250,000.00	250,000.00
04	Onicha-Igboeze	07	Extension of Electricity	Electricity	7,397,700.00	6,657,930.00	739,770.00
		08	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Boreholes (4Nos)	Water	2,600,000.00	2,340,000.00	260,000.00
05	Oshiri	09	Extension of Electricity with 2Nos of 300KVA Transformer	Electricity	7,740,000.00	6,966,000.00	774,000.00
		10	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Boreholes (3Nos)	Water	2,250,000.00	2,025,000.00	225,000.00
Total					49,832,700.00	44,849,430.00	4,983,270.00

Source: Tables 3-15: EB-CSDA Progress Report, 2019 in Emeka-Njoku (2019)

Ebonyi State Community and Social Development Agency (EB-CSDA), is rated high in both development projects and implementation performance. Over 80 per cent of respondents are unanimous that the agency has lived up to its avowed mandate; evidenced in the tables above (Njoku, 2019). The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and the World Bank (WB) are equally in agreement on the desirability of the community development approach in the overall strategy for poverty reduction in the country. However, EB-CSDA’s approach to poverty reduction and social development at the grassroots, like its predecessors’ (EB-CPRA and the UNDP micro-credit schemes) are still group-targeted. The essential and indeed, all-pervading fact is that, poverty resides more on the individual and group initiative in selecting community projects, undermine personal preferences. (Udu, 2015).

Analysis of the systemic factors responsible for Rural Poverty in Ebonyi State

From the foregoing review, we have noted that successive governments of Ebonyi State at different periods had undertake different programmes aimed at poverty reduction in the state particularly at its rural communities. Unfortunately, these programmes have been group-targeted and incapable of frontally tackling the salient factors responsible for persistent poverty in the areas. The question now, is: “what are those factors to which pervasive poverty in Ebonyi State rural communities may be attributed?”

Table 16 enumerates these factors to include: hostile business environment; unemployment, improper assessment of needs, absence of industrial infrastructure, weak institutions/poor governance, unstable source of income, poor educational background, and high cost of living (Udu, Nwoba and Ibenwo, 2021). These factors though agrees with earlier study of Udu and Onwe (2016), Edo (2003) and Nkwede (2014) differ in areas of improper assessment, corruption of government/agency officials and activities of rural community to representative (elites) that were all included among factors to which pervasive rural poverty can be attributed.

Table 16: Percentage factors responsible for pervasive poverty in Ebonyi State rural communities

Factors responsible for pervasive poverty	Mean (x)	Remark
Hostile business environment	4.65	Accepted
Unemployment	3.51	Accepted
Improper assessment of needs	2.85	Rejected
Absence of industrial infrastructure	3.09	Accepted
Weak institutions/poor governance	3.44	Accepted
Corruption among government and agency officials	2.96	Rejected
Unstable source of income	3.71	Accepted
Poor educational background	3.42	Accepted
High cost of living	3.61	Accepted
Elite conspiracy	2.78	Rejected

Source: Udu, et al (2021)

At this juncture, it is pertinent to analytically discuss these factors in view of our theoretical guiding compass for this study.

(i) Hostile Business Environment: Hostile business environment is a systemic factor to which pervasive poverty in Ebonyi rural communities may be attributed. An environment is said to be hostile for business when it is not conducive for normal business operations. An environment assumes hostile status when there is excessive taxation, extortion by corrupt government agents/task force, etc which ultimately translates to increased cost of doing business and, discourages investors, many of whom have already fled the state. Unfortunately, Ebonyi needs business investment if we must pull away from poverty ridden situation particularly in consideration of the fact that there's no government-owned industry aside of education institutions which face the predicament of high managerial costs occasioned by excessive taxation/poor funding. All these culminate to lack of employment opportunities and further complicate the critical issue of pervasive poverty in the state.

Furthermore, a study carried out by Odoh (2020) on relocation of market from the former Abakpa Main Market to the new Ochudo International market rather than promoting economic well-being of the traders, unfortunately spelt at increased hardship, dwindled wares and poverty among the trades and their dependents. She contended that the haphazard/chaotic process that characterized the relocation compelled shop owners who could not secure accommodation in the new market to seek for alternative warehouses to store their goods; many simply resorted to storing their wares in their residential houses. This situation, according to Odoh (2020) unavoidably, gave rise to a fresh dimension of poverty on a people who depend solely in market to earn a living and, particularly worsened by the onslaught of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The above scenario is in tandem with Kamil (2018) Blame the victim and blame the system poverty theory when he posted that in a harsh economic environment, the struggling poor can hardly cope with conditions negatively prevailing against them such that they tend to continue to strive at the minimal means of livelihood and may never overcome this to ascend to economic stability.

Similarly in their various studies, Udu and Nwofoke (2018) and Udu (2019) asserted that among the various factors responsible for pervasive poverty in Ebonyi State, harsh economic environment and excessive level of taxation which sometimes are multiple taxation, tops the scale.

(ii) Unemployment: According to IATEC, (2014) in Udu and Abah, (2016) unemployment is high 28.5% in 2012, projected to 20% in 2014 unemployment level in Nigeria and has been in the increase. In Ebonyi State, there has not been any employment into the ministries or government parastatal since 2015, neither has there been staff promotion for 7 years running; similarly, salaries/emoluments of staff have been irregular coupled with glaring lack of incentives whatsoever (Nwovu, 2022; Ogbaga, 2021). The link between unemployment and poverty is obvious. An unemployed person is essentially a poor individual particularly in a predominant high cost of living in the country. With high rate of unemployment, income sources become unstable and poverty inevitably looms. The situation is worsened by the extended family system prevalent among Ebonyi people. A typical citizen of Ebonyi State has numerous family dependents-nuclear relatives making such a person a victim of relative poverty stemming from the heavy weight of responsibilities which tend to reduce the finances at such a person's disposal Udu, *et al* (2021) captured the situation more worrisomely, when they asserted that many Ebonyians particularly the working class are still grappling with the lower order needs described by Abraham Maslow (1865) as the need for food, clothing and shelter which tantamount to a situation where everything is simultaneously a priority.

(iii) Improper needs Assessment: The difference between two types of needs in development studies need to be clearly stated and understood to enable us appreciate the reason why government and agency poverty reduction programmes tend to fail in addressing the purported beneficiaries' situations. There is "real need" and "felt need". While real need explains the actual needs/aspirations of the target beneficiaries, felt need explains what government and development agencies perceive to be what the people need. This mix-up accounts for the failures of most poverty reduction programmes in our clime. There's hardly and sponsored studies to understand the demographic characteristics or complexities of the rural communities while government plunge headlong to paternalistically dispense rural development/poverty reduction programmes stemming from the views of the people's representatives who are often self-serving. This situation has continued to result to a kind of mismatch between poverty reduction programmes and the real need of the targetted beneficiaries. Our contention in this study is that poverty resides more with the individual and group initiative in selecting community projects, undermine personal preferences and, hence, fail to truly address the factors that would pull the poor out of their poverty-ridden situations.

(iv) Poor Educational Background: There is an assertion that education is key to success. By implications, an educated person ought to have prerequisite professional skills and knowledge to either work for government or become self-employed and self-relevant and, by extension, become an employer of labour by establishing business/industrial outfit that can offer gainful employment to people.

Unfortunately, Ebonyi State has been hitherto classified among the educationally disadvantaged states in the country (Aba, 2005). This is why the first civilian regime in this state embarked on free and compulsory primary and secondary education so as to rewrite this hitherto, inglorious educational status of the state. The same administration even embarked on the Hi-PACT programme where indigent but intelligent Ebonyians were offered state government scholarship to study overseas particularly in the UK. All these have become history as successive administrations failed to sustain the tempo and even increased fees for higher education while the secondary schools from where candidates for tertiary education are harvested are left to structurally and administratively dilapidate through lack of funding, compelling parents who can afford it resort to sending their children/wards to private schools with the attendant high costs. With increased cost of education, the finances of parents are depleted, hardship increases because of the high level of inflation in the country and yet, the children at graduation, fall back to rely on their aging parents due to the vicious cycle of unemployment. All these culminate to pervasive poverty in our state which obviously is attributable to systemic factors.

vi. Corruption and poor governance: This factor hardly requires any explanation due to the fact that anybody living in Nigeria, particularly in Ebonyi State knows the effect of corrupt leadership and poor governance amongst our supposed leaders. There is high level of politicization by government of poverty reduction programmes and the socio-economic well-being of the citizens. For instance, emphasis tend to be placed more on the aesthetic nature of the environment than on economic sustenance of citizens in a state that has been classified as one of the most poverty stricken states in the country. This issue tend to have worsened with the present state government such that even the socio-economic development projects which essentially are embarked upon via the instrumentality of partnership between government and the beneficiary communities have apparently suffered a set back comparatively. Table 17 explains the counterpart contributions of Governor Elechi’s administration between 2009 and 2015 at ₦350, million while the Umahi government contributed ₦100, million for two years (2016 & 2017) only.

Table 17: Ebonyi State government contributions to EB-CSDA Projects

Governor Elechi’s Administration		Governor Umahi’s Administration	
Year	Amount ₦	Year	Amount ₦
2009	₦50.0 million (m)	2016	50.0m
2010	50.0m	2017	50.0m
2011	50.0m	2018	-
2012	50.0m	2019	-
2013	50.0m		
2014	50.0m		
2015	50.0m		
Total	₦350,000,000m		100,000,000m

Source: EB-CSDA Working Document, 2019 in Njoku, (2019)

II. Conclusion/Recommendations

The study set out to investigate the causative factors responsible for rural poverty in Ebonyi State with a view to determining whether the scourge is systemic or could be attributed to lack of capacity of the victim. Indeed, the issue of poverty is critical and central to socio-economic development of a nation. In view of this, successive governments in Ebonyi State had at different periods embarked on community and poverty reduction programmes. Much as most of these programmes made significant impacts on the socio-economic status of Ebonyi people, poverty seems to be pervasive. The involvement of the beneficiary communities in project identification, selection and implementation notwithstanding, poverty seems evasive despite interventionist strategies aimed at stemming the tide. This ugly scenario is attributable to poor background studies in the demographic characteristics and complexities of the rural communities in the state; which often, have resulted to a sort of mismatch between efforts at poverty reduction and real needs of the beneficiaries.

The study has clearly established the relevance of the “Blame the victim and blame the system” poverty theory to the realities of Ebonyi State rural communities and asserts that most of the factors identified as being responsible for pervasive rural poverty in the state, such as hostile business environment, corruption/poor governance, unstable sources of income amongst others, are purely systemic; hence, the system is culpable for persistent rural poverty in the state.

The study contends that efforts at poverty reduction should be focused more on individuals rather than targeting them on the group. This is because poverty resides more with the individual and group initiatives are capable of undermining personal choices, preferences and aspirations of specific individuals.

Accordingly, there should be a revolutionary and humanistic approach to poverty reduction programmes which essentially should embody sincere and concrete strategies for job creation, income stability, reduction in the cost of living, including education and health in addition to sincerely creating enabling environment for entrepreneurial ventures.

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