

## **The Prospects and Challenges of the Implementation of N-Power Graduate Scheme on Poverty Reduction among Beneficiaries in Maiduguri, Borno state, Nigeria.**

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**Abstract:** The debate on poverty alleviation remains fundamental in Nigeria since independence, although like many other African countries characterized by series of hunger, illnesses abject poverty and instability of the political system, the quest for national development and youth empowerment remains fundamental. Many poverty eradication Programme were initiated by previous government in Nigeria yet poverty rate is still alarming. Therefore, this necessitate the present government to initiate the N-Power scheme for poverty alleviation. It is in the light of this background that this study examines the prospects and challenges of the implementation of N-Power graduate scheme on poverty reduction among beneficiaries in Maiduguri Urban center. The methodology used is quantitative in nature using both primary and secondary sources of data, sampling 99 respondents from the population of 7,325 beneficiaries and convenient techniques was used to select respondents from the sample size. The study found that fund allocation, disbursement, application of information and communication technology and monitoring and evaluation has been very effective as a strategy adopted for the implementation of N-Power graduate scheme. The scheme has also record a significant prospects in uplifting the beneficiaries income, style of life, skills acquisitions and other benefit. The study also revealed that despite the prospects there are some challenges, which include delay in payment as well as inconsistent placement of enrollees among other problems. The study concluded that the Programme has recorded a tremendous prospects in poverty reduction among beneficiaries in Maiduguri and further recommended that more effort should be made in monitoring and evaluation and government should disburse more fund for the implementation of the scheme among other recommendations.

**Key words:** Prospects and Challenges, Implementations, N-Power, Poverty and Maiduguri.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Poverty has been in existence for a long time but relative to time, place and individual because what a particular society consider as poverty may not be necessary it in another society. But in a general sense Island poverty is that which exist in the midst of plenty such as Nigeria according to the World Bank (2006). However, since Poverty is considered by many individuals as lack of access to basic needs/goods it is essentially economic or consumption-oriented. Thus, the poor are conceived as those individuals or households in a particular society, incapable of purchasing a specified basket of basic goods and services. Basic goods as used here include; food, shelter, water, healthcare, access to productive resources including education, working skill and tools, political and civil rights to participate in decisions concerning socio-economic conditions .

Over the years, the Federal Government has undertaken some Programme with the objectives of reducing if not totally eradicating poverty in Nigeria. These Programme were at least expected to raise the standard of living of Nigerians. Some of these Programme include; The Family Support Programme (FEAP), the establishment of Community Banks and Small Scale Industries Credit Scheme, People's Bank, the National Agricultural Land Development Agency (NALDA), Rural Employment Programme (REP) and the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) among others. However, the impact of these Programme on alleviating poverty has been contentious as the desired results of these Programme are not achieved. With the return of democracy on May 29, 1999 the Federal Government embarked on poverty reduction Programme specifically, the government put up the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in the year 2000 which took off in 2001.

By 2015 the Nigerian Federal Government lunch the N-Power schemes which is aimed at poverty reduction among Nigerian Youths to enhance skills development. It is real that despite the current high level of unemployment, harnessing Nigeria's young demography through appropriate skill development efforts provides

an opportunity to achieve inclusion and productivity within the country. N-Power addresses the challenge of youth unemployment by providing a structure for large scale and relevant work skills acquisition and development while linking its core and outcomes to fixing inadequate public services and stimulating the larger economy. The modular Programme under N-Power ensures that each participant learns and practice most of what is necessary to find or create work. The N-Power Volunteer Corp involves a massive deployment of 500,000 trained graduates who assist to improve the inadequacies in Nigeria's public services in education, health and civic education. Some of these graduates also help in actualizing Nigeria's economic and strategic aspirations of achieving food security and self-sufficiency. It is light of the above background the study intends to assess the prospects and challenges of the implementation of N-Power graduates' scheme on poverty reduction among beneficiaries in Maiduguri.

### **Statement of Problem**

It has been known in Nigeria that every government embarks on one form of poverty reduction strategy or the other. However, what has remained unanswered is the extent to which these Programme have impacted on the poor – the target population. Recent studies on the subject poverty and its reduction agencies as well as Programme indicate that considerable gap exists between the target objective – alleviating or eradicating poverty – and achievement. It seems that the efforts of various governments are ineffective and therefore not much has been done to actualize the benefits. For poverty reduction agencies, their results do not seem to justify the huge financial allocations to them. Poor people's perceptions of formal poverty reduction institutions are largely that of ineffectiveness and irrelevance in their lives as government poverty reduction activities contribute little in their struggles to survive and rarely help them to escape poverty.

Today, our streets are filled with men, women and even children fronting for their parents in begging for money and even food. The poor who operate behind the scene have taken to armed robbery, gambling, 419 and cheating in their offices. Everybody seems poor. Many families cannot afford one good meal in a day. Children are withdrawn from schools. Families resort to herbal medicine for treatment each time a member of the family falls sick. There is massive unemployment from peasant to university graduates. There is corruption even in high places. There are religious riots and ethnic clashes to contend with trouble here and there. This study is aimed at assessing prospects and challenges in the implementation of N-Power on poverty reduction among beneficiaries in Maiduguri.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Concept of Poverty**

The concept of poverty like any other concept in social sciences has not lent credence to a universal acceptable definition. A major problem with the literature on poverty alleviation as far as this study is concerned is that most works tend to focus more on poverty in general rather than being specific on alleviation efforts of individual countries. Attempt will however be made to look at these general issues and then try to tie them to look at these general issues and then try to tie them to the specifics later. Ravallion and Bidami (1994:5) refer to poverty as a lack of command over basic consumption needs that is, a situation of inadequate level of consumption, giving rise to insufficient food, clothing and shelter. Poverty has also been defined as the inability to attain a minimum standard of living (World Development Report, 1990).

The report constructed two indices based on a minimum level of consumption in order to show the practical aspect of the concept. While the first index was a country specific poverty line, the second was global allowing cross-country comparisons, Walton (1990:13).

### **Empirical Review**

Maduagwu (2000) in the study "Alleviating poverty in Nigeria" were of the view that both foreign and domestic investment will enhance economic growth and development, but other essentials are required to achieve the goal of economic growth and development such as rule of law, and provision of infrastructure. The study stressed that rule of law is essential because "it ensures life and personal security, it also provides a stable framework of rights and obligations which can help to reduce political risks to investors and to cut down transportation costs". According to the study, business does not thrive in an environment of unchecked abuses of political power, unchecked violence by security personnel, and unchecked corruption (official and non-official corruption)". Corroborating 1997, World Development report which concluded that no market can exist without effective property rights, and that effective property rights depends on fulfilling the following three conditions; protection from theft, violence and other acts of perditions; protection from arbitrary government actions-ranging from unpredictable, ad hoc regulations and taxes to outright corruption that disrupt business activities; and a reasonable fair and predictable judiciary.

Evbuomwan (2013) in the study "Poverty Alleviation through Agricultural projects: A Review of world Bank Assisted Agricultural Development Projects in Nigeria" suggested that poverty alleviation goes

beyond short term relief and the satisfaction of basic human needs, but also the development strategies of increasing the long-term productive potential and therefore the incomes of the poor. According to the study, it is necessary to integrate macroeconomic policies, sector planning and sound project interventions. The study suggests that in an agrarian economy like Nigeria, one of the best means available to governments for alleviating poverty is agricultural projects, the study emphasized that despite the fact Nigeria has launched various schemes, programmes and projects in order to increase output and well-being of the masses, most of them did not stand the test of time due to poor planning.

Okunmadewa (2014) in the study “Domestic and international response to poverty alleviation in Nigeria” was of the view that in Nigeria, international agencies such as European Union, Department for international Development (DFID), Food Foundation and the UN group are very active in poverty reduction activities. The UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, ILO, WHO, and the role of NGOs in poverty alleviation in Nigeria has been observed to be a veritable and effective channels to ensure programme implementation effectiveness, particularly in poverty reduction projects in view of on-the-ground presence and first-hand knowledge of the needs and interest of the poor.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study is anchored on elite theory, which is of the view that political power resides in a few in the society while the majority are led. Elites, according to the proponents of the theory Gaetano (1939), Michels (1942) have features as wealth, intelligence, special skills, moral character, and hosts of others. The theory holds the view that the society is made of two classes the higher stratum, the elite that is further divided into the ruling class or governing and non-governing elite, and a lower stratum or non-elite. The connection of this theory to explaining effect of (N-power) on income generation and welfare of beneficiaries in Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno State essentially lies within the context of the role of elites in policy making. Policy makers in their own rights, are elites. Incidentally, they often tend to reflect their values and preferences as they formulate policies. Corroborating this view, Ayinde (2008), averred that “only a matter of coincidence if the policy decisions of the elite reflect the interests of the masses”, as they sometime do. For instance in Borno State, the N-power Scheme to a reasonable extent has reflected interests of the beneficiaries as large chunk of activities in the scheme is service sand rural based.

### **Research Methodology**

The study is built on survey method using both Primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected through the administration of the questionnaire and interview instrument. Secondary data was sourced from published journals, newspaper, internet, etc. The population of the study consists of beneficiaries as well as the drivers of N-Power graduate scheme in Maiduguri. According to N-Power report, the number of successful candidates comprising of N-Teach, N-Health, N-Tax and N-Agro is 7,489 in Borno state. The sample size stands at 99 drawn from the population mentioned using sample size calculator. Convenient sampling techniques was utilized in selecting the respondents cut across the beneficiaries and drivers of the scheme from all areas of specialty. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The choice of descriptive statistics was based on the fact that it allows the researcher to describe important demographic and behavioral data which characterized the population.

## **RESULT AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

**Table 1.1 Respondents view on Fund allocation as a strategy for the implementation of N-Power Graduate Programme**

<b>R e s p o n s e</b>	<b>F r e q u e n c y</b>		<b>P e r c e n t a g e</b>		
V e r y e f f e c t i v e	2	9	3	0	. 5
E f f e c t i v e	4	2	4	4	. 2
I n e f f e c t i v e	1	3	1	3	. 6
V e r y I n e f f e c t i v e	1	1	1	1	. 5
T o t a l	9	5	1	0	0

**Source: Fieldwork, 2018**

Table 1.1 indicates respondents’ views on the effective of fund allocation as a strategy of N-Power. 30.5% said it’s very effective, 44.2% said its effective, 13.6% said its ineffective while 11.5% said it’s very ineffective. This implies that fund allocation as a strategy adopted by N-Power graduate scheme has been effective. This is due to the fact that the respondents that agreed that fund allocation as a strategy of N-Power constituted the majority of the respondents.

**Table 1.2: Respondents view on Fund disbursement as a strategy for the implementation of N-Power Graduate Programme**

R e s p o n s e	F r e q u e n c y		P e r c e n t a g e		
E x c e l l e n t	1	7	1	7	. 8
V e r y G o o d	3	0	3	1	. 5
F a i r	4	3	4	5	. 2
P o o r	0	5	5	.	2
T o t a l	9	5	1	0	0

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Table 1.2 indicates respondents' views on the implementation of fund disbursement by N-Power. 17.8% said it's excellent, 31.5% said it's very good, 45.2% said its fair while 5.2% said it's poor. This implies that fund disbursement as an implementation strategy by N-Power graduate scheme has been fair to the beneficiaries. This is due to the fact that a slight majority of the respondents stated that utilization of fund disbursement as a strategy for implementation of N-Power Programme is fair.

**Table 1.3 Respondents view on the application of ICT as a strategy for the implementation of N-Power Graduate Programme**

R e s p o n s e	F r e q u e n c y		P e r c e n t a g e		
E x c e l l e n t	4	1	4	3	. 1
V e r y G o o d	3	2	3	3	. 6
F a i r	1	5	1	5	. 7
P o o r	0	7	7	.	3
T o t a l	9	5	1	0	0

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Table 1.4 indicates respondents' views on the application of ICT as a strategy for the implementation of N-Power Programme. 43.1% said it's excellent, 33.6% said it's very good, 15.7% said its fair while 7.3% said it's poor. This implies that the application of ICT by N-Power as an implementation scheme has been excellent. This is because of the fact that most of the respondents viewed the application of ICT as N-Power graduate scheme implementation is excellent.

**Table 1.5: Respondents view on Monitoring and Evaluation as a strategy for the implementation of N-Power Graduate Programme**

R e s p o n s e	F r e q u e n c y		P e r c e n t a g e		
V e r y G o o d	0	8	8	.	4
G o o d	1	2	1	2	. 6
F a i r	5	2	5	4	. 7
P o o r	2	3	2	4	. 2
T o t a l	9	5	1	0	0

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Table 1.5 shows respondents views on the monitoring and evaluation strategy used by N-Power. 8.4% said it's very good, 12.6% said its good, 54.7% said its fair while 24.2% said it's poor. This implies that the utilization of monitoring and evaluation strategy as adopted by N-Power graduate scheme has been fair. This is because a vast majority of the respondents stated that monitoring and evaluation strategy used by N-Power is fair.

**Table 1.6 Respondents view on whether their income level has increase significantly as a result of the implementation of N-Power Graduate Programme**

I t e m	F r e q u e n c y		P e r c e n t a g e		
S t r o n g l y A g r e e	5	5	5	7	. 8
A g r e e	2	9	3	0	. 5
S t r o n g l y D i s a g r e e	0	4	4	.	2
D i s a g r e e	0	7	7	.	3
T o t a l	9	5	1	0	0

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Table 1.6 indicates if the implementation of N-power has improved their income. 57.8% strongly agreed, 30.5% agreed, 4.2% strongly disagreed while 7.3% disagreed. This implies that the implementation of N-power graduate scheme has improved the income of the beneficiaries above their previous level.

**Table 1.7 Respondents view on whether the implementation of N-Power Graduate Programme has significantly improves the satisfactions of their basic needs**

<b>R e s p o n s e</b>	<b>F r e q u e n c y</b>		<b>P e r c e n t a g e</b>		
S t r o n g l y A g r e e	3	7	3	8	. 9
A g r e e	2	9	3	0	. 5
S t r o n g l y D i s a g r e e	0	9			. 4
D i s a g r e e	2	0	2		1
T o t a l	9	5	1	0	0

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Table 1.7 indicates views on the impact of the implementation of N-power graduate scheme in meeting up with their day to day activities. 38.9% strongly agreed, 30.5% agreed, 9.4% strongly disagreed while 21% disagreed. This implies that the implementation of N-power has influenced the satisfaction of basic needs of the beneficiaries.

**Table 1.8 Respondents view on whether the implementation of N-Power Graduate Programme has significantly provides them with new skills for self sufficiency**

<b>R e s p o n s e</b>	<b>F r e q u e n c y</b>		<b>P e r c e n t a g e</b>		
S t r o n g l y A g r e e	3	7	3	8	. 9
A g r e e	2	9	3	0	. 5
S t r o n g l y D i s a g r e e	0	9			. 4
D i s a g r e e	2	0	2		1
T o t a l	9	5	1	0	0

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Table 1.8 indicates views on the impact of the implementation of N-Power graduate scheme in the acquisitions of skills for self-dependency and generation of employment. 38.9% strongly agreed, 30.5% agreed, 9.4% strongly disagreed while 21% disagreed. This implies that the implementation of N-power has significantly provided the beneficiaries adequate skills that makes them to be employers of labor.

**Table 1.9 Respondents view on whether the implementation of N-Power Graduate Programme has significantly changed their life style for better**

<b>R e s p o n s e</b>	<b>F r e q u e n c y</b>		<b>P e r c e n t a g e</b>		
S t r o n g l y A g r e e	2	2	2		1
A g r e e	3	5	3	3	. 3
S t r o n g l y D i s a g r e e	1	8	1		7
D i s a g r e e	2	0	1		9
T o t a l	9	5	1	0	0

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Table 1.9 indicates views on the impact of the implementation of N-power graduate scheme for the betterment of their life style. 38.9% strongly agreed, 30.5% agreed, 9.4% strongly disagreed while 21% disagreed. This implies that the implementation of N-power has influenced the life style of the beneficiaries in many ways which includes food, consumption, health status as well as their shelter among others.

**Table 1.10 Respondents view on whether mismanagement of funds constitutes a challenge on the implementation of N-Power Graduate Programme**

<b>R e s p o n s e</b>	<b>F r e q u e n c y</b>		<b>P e r c e n t a g e</b>		
S t r o n g l y A g r e e	4	1	4	3	. 1
A g r e e	3	3	3	4	. 7
S t r o n g l y D i s a g r e e	1	2	1	2	. 6
D i s a g r e e	0	9			. 4
T o t a l	9	5	1	0	0

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Table 1.10 indicates respondents view on mismanagement of funds by the management of N-Power graduate scheme is considered as one of the major challenges of the scheme. 43.1% strongly agreed, 34.7% agreed, 12.6% strongly disagreed while 9.4% disagreed. This implies that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that mismanagement of fund is a challenge confronting the scheme.

**Table 1.11 Respondents view on whether the placement of enrollees constitutes a challenge on the implementation of N-Power Graduate Programme**

<b>R e s p o n s e</b>	<b>F r e q u e n c y</b>		<b>P e r c e n t a g e</b>		
S t r o n g l y A g r e e	3	3	3	4	. 7
A g r e e	4	1	4	3	. 1
S t r o n g l y D i s a g r e e	1	2	1	2	. 6
D i s a g r e e	0	9	9	.	4
T o t a l	9	5	1	0	0

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Table 1.11 indicates respondents view on placement of enrollees by the management of N-Power graduate scheme is considered as one of the major challenges of the scheme. 34.7% strongly agreed, 43.1% agreed, 12.6% strongly disagreed while 9.4% disagreed. This implies that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that placement of enrollees is a challenge confronting the scheme especially graduates from the arts and social sciences disciplines.

**Table 1.12 Respondents view on whether delay of initial payment for new enrollees constitutes a challenge on the implementation of N-Power Graduate Programme**

<b>R e s p o n s e</b>	<b>F r e q u e n c y</b>		<b>P e r c e n t a g e</b>		
S t r o n g l y A g r e e	3	3	3	4	. 7
A g r e e	4	1	4	3	. 1
S t r o n g l y D i s a g r e e	1	2	1	2	. 6
D i s a g r e e	0	9	9	.	4
T o t a l	9	5	1	0	0

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Table 1.12 indicates respondents view on delay of payment for new enrollees by the management of N-Power graduate scheme is considered as one of the major challenges of the scheme. 34.7% strongly agreed, 43.1% agreed, 12.6% strongly disagreed while 9.4% disagreed. This implies that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that delay of payment for new enrollees is a challenge confronting the scheme especially for those enrollees that have not been able to complete their registration and documentation at the early time.

**Table 1.13 Respondents view on whether the inconsistency of placement of enrollees constitutes a challenge on the implementation of N-Power Graduate Programme**

<b>R e s p o n s e</b>	<b>F r e q u e n c y</b>		<b>P e r c e n t a g e</b>		
S t r o n g l y A g r e e	3	3	3	4	. 7
A g r e e	4	1	4	3	. 1
S t r o n g l y D i s a g r e e	1	2	1	2	. 6
D i s a g r e e	0	9	9	.	4
T o t a l	9	5	1	0	0

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Table 1.13 indicates respondents view on placement of enrollees by the management of N-Power graduate scheme is considered as one of the major challenges of the scheme. 34.7% strongly agreed, 43.1% agreed, 12.6% strongly disagreed while 9.4% disagreed. This implies that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that placement of enrollees is a challenge confronting the scheme especially graduates from the arts and social sciences disciplines.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study revealed that fund allocation as a strategy adopted by N-Power graduate scheme has been effective. This is due to the fact that the respondents that agreed that fund allocation as a strategy of N-Power constituted the majority of the respondents. Therefore, funding has not been the problem of the Programme since its inception because their payment of monthly allowances has been apt and regular. This is in

contradiction with the study of Walton (1990:13) of the previous poverty eradication Programme such as NAPEP and other poverty alleviations Programme in Nigeria. Where it found out that severe budgetary allocation, mismanagement and bad governance have afflicted the Programme resulting in facilities or infrastructure not being completed or even established. Similarly, fund disbursement as an implementation strategy by N-Power has been fair to the beneficiaries. This is due to the fact that a slight majority of the respondents stated that utilization of fund disbursement as a strategy for implementation of N-Power Programme is fair. The application of ICT by N-Power as an implementation scheme has been excellent. This is because of the fact that most of the respondents viewed it as such.

The study also shows that the utilization of monitoring and evaluation strategy as adopted by N-Power has been fair. This is because a vast majority of the respondents stated that monitoring and evaluation strategy used by N-Power is fair. Although there is a slight negligence on the part of the officials of the Scheme in the aspect of irregularity of their visitation to the place of postings. The study also revealed that the implementation of N-power has improved the income of the beneficiaries above their previous level. This is because majority of the respondents were living below the minimum pay of the scheme before their enrollment but now their income has significantly improved, with some of them even saving for future. Some of them confessed that they have never owned thirty thousand naira cash on monthly bases until their enrolment into the Programme. The implementation of N-power has influenced the satisfaction of basic needs of the beneficiaries in the aspect of feeding, health status, clothing and even shelter. This is because majority of them are of that opinion. As part of the prospects of the implementation of N-power, it has significantly provided the beneficiaries adequate skills that makes them to be employers of labor which is the primary rationale behind the creation of the Programme. The study also revealed that there has been a drastic changes in the life style of the beneficiaries in their daily affairs, this implies a major prospects of the scheme in Maiduguri town.

Despite all the remarkable prospects of the scheme certain challenges were identified by the study among which is the mismanagement of funds allocated to the running of daily affairs of the scheme. Another important problem of the scheme is placement of enrollees especially graduates from the arts and social sciences disciplines. Majority of the respondents were of the opinion that delay of payment for new enrollees is a challenge confronting the scheme especially for those enrollees that have not been able to complete their registration and documentation at the early time. It is evident from the study that recruitment of the enrollees has been another silent problem confronting the implementation of the scheme from the inception because residential address is considered more relevant than state of origin, this undermine the possibly of covering those in the rural areas because before they accessed the facility it must have been exhausted by those in the urban centers.

### **CONCLUSION**

Majority of the respondents strongly agreed that corruption, lack of access to education, crime and violence and debt burden are causes of poverty but disagreed that overpopulation is also a cause. Also, most those who responded strongly agreed that the scheme design is considered to be very effective in their localities. Furthermore, majority of the respondents stated that the fund allocation as a strategy of N-Power has been effective. Most of those who responded stated that the implementation of fund disbursement by N-Power it's fair. Also, majority of the responded stated that the application of ICT as N-power implementation scheme has been excellent. In addition, most of the respondents stated that the monitoring and evaluation strategy used by N-power its fair. Majority of the respondent strongly agreed that mismanagement if funds by the management of the scheme is considered as one of the major challenges of the scheme. Finally, most of the respondents strongly agreed that the implementation of N-power has improved their income. Most of those who responded strongly agreed that implementation of N-power has improved their access to basic needs

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations have been put forward:

- i. The government should increase the awareness campaign on the importance education as a solution to poverty and also ensure a corrupt, crime and violence free society.
- ii. More measures should be initiated to enhance effective fund allocation and disbursement.
- iii. The monitoring and evaluation team should be motivated to ensure the elimination of loopholes.
- iv. The government should ensure that whoever is found wanting of theft and fund mismanagement should be brought to book to serve as a deterrent to others.
- v. Beneficiaries should also be consistent in communicating to the management for improvement of its mandate
- vi. The recruitment exercise should be strictly by character system not residential system

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