

The Role of World Bank in Poverty Reduction in Gombe State

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Abstract

This study examines the role of the World Bank in poverty reduction in Gombe State, focusing on infrastructure development, agriculture, and social safety nets. It adopted Human Capital Theory as its theoretical framework. The study focuses on Gombe State, targeting rural youth, women in agriculture, the poor, and internally displaced persons (IDPs). A survey research design is employed, utilizing a purposive sampling technique to conduct oral interviews with selected six respondents. The finding shows that World Bank-supported projects in Gombe State, targeting infrastructure development, agriculture, and social safety nets, have significantly impacted poverty levels. Infrastructure projects and the collaboration between the World Bank, Gombe State government, and local communities has been crucial in shaping the design, implementation, and sustainability of poverty reduction efforts. It recommends that world bank should invest in capacity-building programs for local government officials and community leaders should be intensified to foster greater ownership and sustainability of initiatives. Finally, Gombe State government, and local communities should establish a formalized multi-stakeholder coordination committee.

Key words: World Bank, poverty reduction, Gombe State, infrastructure development, agriculture, social safety nets, sustainable development.

Introduction

Gombe State, nestled in northeastern Nigeria, faces a persistent challenge of poverty. Despite strides towards development, a significant portion of the population grapples with limited access to basic necessities and opportunities. In this context, the World Bank, a global institution dedicated to poverty reduction, emerges as a potential partner in Gombe's fight for a better future. However, to understand the World Bank's potential impact, we must delve deeper into the complexities of poverty in Gombe and the organisation's approach to tackling this multifaceted issue (World Bank, 2023). Poverty in Gombe manifests in limited access to quality education and healthcare and restricts opportunities for upward mobility. Many residents, particularly in rural areas, rely on rain-fed agriculture, making them vulnerable to climate shocks and food insecurity. Furthermore, limited infrastructure development constrains economic growth and job opportunities. These factors create a vicious cycle of poverty, perpetuating itself across generations (World Bank, 2023). The World Bank tackles poverty through a comprehensive approach. Financial resources are a crucial tool. The International Development Association (IDA), a World Bank arm, provides loans and grants to support government initiatives in poverty reduction. These funds can target infrastructure development projects that improve access to markets and essential services. Beyond finance, the World Bank offers technical expertise. This includes sharing best practices in poverty reduction strategies from around the world. Experts conduct research on effective interventions and provide capacity building for local institutions, empowering them to design and implement programs effectively. The World Bank also advocates for policies that foster economic growth and social inclusion, recognised as fundamental drivers of long-term poverty reduction (World Bank, n.d.). While specific details on World Bank projects directly targeting poverty reduction in Gombe might be limited, the organisation has supported broader development initiatives in the state. The Gombe Agricultural Development Project (GADP) serves as one such example. The GADP, completed in 2013, was aimed at boosting agricultural productivity and improving marketing infrastructure. The project sought to increase rural incomes by empowering farmers and enhancing agricultural yields, a crucial step in poverty reduction efforts (World Bank, 2019). Evaluating the World Bank's impact on poverty reduction in Gombe presents complexities. Poverty reduction is a multifaceted issue influenced by numerous factors. Isolating the specific impact of World Bank projects from government initiatives or broader economic trends can be challenging. Furthermore, data on the long-term effects of these projects on poverty levels might be scarce. Measuring success requires sustained monitoring and evaluation efforts. Finally, factors beyond the World Bank's control, such as political instability or corruption, can hinder project implementation (World Bank, 2022).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the World Bank's support for infrastructure development, agriculture, and social safety nets in Gombe State, poverty remains a persistent challenge. While these projects aim to enhance economic opportunities and improve livelihoods, the extent of their impact on poverty reduction remains unclear. Limited empirical studies have examined whether these interventions have significantly improved household income, employment rates, and social welfare. Furthermore, issues such as project sustainability, resource allocation, and policy implementation gaps raise concerns about their long-term effectiveness. This study investigates the measurable impact of World Bank-supported projects on poverty alleviation in Gombe State, addressing existing knowledge gaps.

Effective poverty reduction efforts require strong collaboration between international agencies, state governments, and local communities. However, the extent to which the World Bank, Gombe State government, and local communities collaborate in designing, implementing, and sustaining poverty alleviation projects remains uncertain. Weak coordination, limited community involvement, and bureaucratic inefficiencies may hinder project effectiveness and long-term impact. Understanding respondents' perspectives on these dynamics is crucial in assessing whether inclusive governance and active participation enhance sustainability. This study examines how the level of collaboration among stakeholders influences the success of poverty reduction initiatives in Gombe State, addressing critical gaps in policy implementation.

Literature Review

Poverty

The issue of poverty was first given much attention by classical political economists in their attempt to explain economic growth, development, and international trade. Adam Smith (1759), in his book "An Inquiry into the Wealth of Nations," identified poverty as a psychic pain that distresses the poor; this, in turn, causes real hardship. He stressed that what oppressed a man in poverty was not a lack of physical comfort or health but a sense of social isolation and inferiority (Smith, 1759). Sen (1997) believes that poverty is the worst form of human deprivation and can only be understood as manifest from the life one leads and that it is anti-progress and anti-development. In his words, poverty is, in many ways, the worst form of human deprivation (Sen., 1997). Mahbub ul Haq (1999) identifies poverty as a bomb that was never defused in high growth periods and can easily explode in a period of slow growth, high inflation, rising unemployment, and deteriorating social services. Poverty, misgovernance, and unevenly distributed growth are today locked in a fatal embrace. Mahbub ul Haq (1999) opines that poverty of opportunity is the problem and not poverty itself because poverty is a result of poverty of opportunity. It is a form of deprivation that creates inequality, which requires an address urgently because it is possible to do so with sincerity of purpose. The most affected region in the world by poverty incidence is Sub-Saharan Africa. The pervasive and chronic nature of poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa created a wider vacuum for infrastructure and human development projects (Estache & Wodon, 2014). Growth and economic recovery have been witnessed in Sub-Saharan Africa, but the issue is the nature in which these growths and economic progress failed to translate into the welfare of the inhabitants of these countries (Arnt, McKay & Tarp, 2016). Nigeria is one of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that is paradoxically poor despite being rich with abundant natural mineral resources endowment and human resource availability in addition to a robust geographical landscape suitable for agricultural and industrial activities. Nigeria is rich, being the tenth largest oil-producing country and possessing diverse rich mineral resources. In addition to human resources, it has a population that is also seventh in the world, currently estimated at 200 million. The majority of Nigerians, amounting to 70%, live in poverty, spending less than USD 2 per day because of many failed policies and a lack of political will to initiate genuine policies that will extricate many individual households from poverty into a better and more prosperous life (National Bureau of Statistics 2017 and Human Development Report 2017, UNDP).

Causes of Poverty

The causes of poverty in developing countries have been debated. According to Dependency scholars like Rodney (1972), Onimode (1983), Offiong (1980), the poverty of Africa and Nigeria in particular is rooted in the unequal relationship developed between the continent and country and the industrialised capitalist countries via the slave trade, the legitimate trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism. The World Bank however associated poverty in Nigeria with mainly macroeconomic problems including fall in oil revenues, excessive borrowing, drift and decline in wages (Fwatshak, 2006). Orji (2008) shares the same view with Fwatshak (2006) on the causes of Nigerian poverty. Magaji (2005) presented a similar analysis like that of Orji but with much emphasis on neo-colonial Nigeria (Magaji, 2005:39). Nwagbbara (2001) sees culture impoverishment via globalisation as a major cause of poverty. To him, cultural impoverishment is yet another form of poverty inflicted on societies through the influence of globalisation. The view by Nwagbbara (2001) is also supported by Mansaray & Mansaray Jnr (2020). Ijaiya (2007:47) reiterates that the factors that cause poverty include: (i) structural causes such as limited resources, lack of skill, location disadvantage and other factors that are inherent in the social and political set up; (ii) the transitional causes that are mainly due to structural adjustment reforms and changes in domestic economic policies that may result in price changes, increase unemployment and others. Natural calamities such as wars, environmental degradation, also include transitory poverty. Aliyu (2008) also attributes the causes of poverty in Nigeria to the structural political, socioeconomic and cultural

factors such poor macroeconomic policies, declining performance of manufacturing sector, increasing foreign debt, mismanagement of resources and poor implementation of government policies.

The same views presented by Aliyu (2008) were also analysed by Sagagi (2008), Maikaba (2008), Edoh (2003), Ajakaiye (2002), Olofin (2008), Anyanwu (1997), and Ajegi (2002) as the major causes of poverty in Nigeria.

Udegbumam (2006) views the role of unemployment in causing poverty, in his critical analysis of unemployment in Nigeria. Udegbumam explains that, nearly 40% of the working population in Nigeria is either jobless or underemployed. He further expanded his analysis on the basis of unemployment among the graduate with formal education. In his study, 1.9% of NCE holders are unemployed, 52.2% of ND and HND, 39.5% of B.sc and 4.9% of M.Sc and PhD holders. In all, the general impact of unemployment is poverty in Nigeria.

Theoretical framework

Human Capital Theory

This study adopted Human Capital Theory as its theoretical framework. The fight against poverty in Gombe State, Nigeria, will benefit from understanding the Human Capital Theory. This theory, championed by economist Gary Becker in 1964, argues that investments in human capital education, healthcare, and skills training are crucial for poverty reduction (Becker, 1964). The core idea is that individuals with greater knowledge, skills, and health are better equipped to participate effectively in the labor market. This translates to higher earning potential, improved productivity, and ultimately, a greater ability to escape poverty.

The World Bank leverages on the Human Capital Theory to inform its poverty reduction strategies in Gombe. The World Bank can support initiatives that improve access to quality education in Gombe. This might involve funding for teacher training programs to enhance teaching quality, infrastructure development in schools to create conducive learning environments, and scholarship programs to ensure access for underprivileged students (World Bank, 2023). Gombe state youth are better positioned to secure higher-paying jobs in the future when equipped with a strong educational foundation. Investments in healthcare infrastructure, equipment, and training for medical personnel in Gombe can significantly impact poverty reduction (World Bank, 2022). Furthermore, improved healthcare reduces vulnerability to medical expenses, freeing up resources for other necessities.

The Human Capital Theory is highly relevant to the study of poverty reduction in Gombe State. It offers a framework for understanding how investments in people rather than just physical infrastructure, can create a sustainable path out of poverty.

Methodology

The study focuses on Gombe State, targeting rural youth, women in agriculture, the poor, and internally displaced persons (IDPs). A survey research design is employed, utilizing a purposive sampling technique to conduct oral interviews with selected respondents. Six respondents were chosen for oral interviews based on purposive sampling to answer questions on the research questions, and the data collected from these interviews were analyzed using content analysis.

Analysis of oral interview

Opinion of respondent on the extent World Bank-supported projects, specifically those targeting infrastructure development, agriculture, or social safety nets, have demonstrably impacted poverty levels in Gombe State(oral interview, 2024)

- a. Are you aware of any recent projects by the World Bank that aimed to help farmers in Gombe State?

According to respondent one;

I believe there was a program a couple of years ago where they distributed fertilizer and better-quality seeds to farmers. I was able to get some fertilizer and seeds for my maize farm. The seeds produced much better crops than what I usually get. My harvest was significantly larger, and I was able to sell more maize at the market. This allowed me to earn more money and buy things for my family that we couldn't afford before, like new clothes for the children and some school supplies. There were a lot of people applying, so it took a while to get registered. But overall, the process was fair. Getting better seeds and fertilizer is a big help, especially for small farmers like me. However, there are still challenges. The price of fertilizer is still high, and sometimes it's difficult to get our produce to the market in good condition due to poor road conditions in some areas.

- b. Have you noticed any recent infrastructure projects happening in Gombe town?

Respondent two was of the view that;

There was major roadworks done around the market area last year, which is fantastic. It used to be a nightmare getting deliveries through those congested streets. It has made a big difference. Deliveries are faster now, and it's easier for customers to reach my shop. I have seen an increase in foot traffic and sales since the roadworks finished.

There was some noise and dust for a while. But overall, we understood the importance of the project and were patient. I have heard about a program that provides monthly cash transfers to widows and single mothers. my neighbor is a widow with two young children. She received some cash transfers a while back, and it helped her immensely. She could afford to put food on the table and send her kids to school. We still need better access to financing for small businesses like mine. Also, improving the electricity grid would be a huge boost for businesses in Gombe.

According to respondent three was of the view that;

We have the Gombe State Agricultural Development Program, which focuses on providing farmers with improved seeds, fertilizers, and training on sustainable farming practices. There's also the Rural Access and Agricultural Mobility Project (RAAMP) which aims to improve rural roads to facilitate the transportation of agricultural products. The World Bank provides funding and technical expertise. We work together to identify project needs, design implementation strategies, and monitor progress. Local communities are also involved in the planning process to ensure the projects address their specific challenges.

Raising awareness about the programs in remote areas can be a challenge. Also, ensuring transparency and fair distribution of resources is crucial. We work closely with local NGOs and community leaders to address these issues. we track various indicators like crop yields, farm incomes, and school enrollment rates. While it's difficult to isolate the impact of individual projects, data suggests a positive trend in poverty reduction in recent years. The projects provide essential resources and infrastructure that empower people to improve their livelihoods. Increased agricultural productivity leads to higher incomes and better food security for families. Improved roads connect rural communities to markets and essential services. We believe these combined efforts are making a significant difference.

Opinion of respondents on how the level of collaboration between the World Bank, Gombe State government, and local communities influence the design, implementation, and long-term sustainability of poverty reduction efforts in Gombe State(oral interview, 2024).

- a. When projects are designed, like the one that provided seeds and fertilizer, do you feel the local community's needs are considered?

According to respondent four;

Sometimes, the things they offer aren't what we necessarily need most. For example, some farmers might need better irrigation systems more than fertilizer. when holding meetings with farmers' associations before launching projects. They could ask us what challenges we face and what kind of support would be most beneficial. Sometimes it seems like information doesn't always reach us. We might not be aware of all the available resources or how to access them. Local leaders could hold regular meetings to explain projects and answer questions. Maybe even have agricultural extension workers visit our farms directly. Training farmers on how to use new technologies and continue sustainable practices after the project ends is important. Otherwise, we might not be able to maintain the improvements on our own.

- b. How do you think collaboration between the World Bank, government, and local communities can improve infrastructure projects?

Nevertheless, respondent five was of the view that;

Whenever everyone is involved, there's a better chance the project addresses real needs. Where Local people know the specific challenges with roads, electricity, or water access in their areas. Maybe the community identifies a specific road needing repair, and the government works with the World Bank to secure funding for that particular project. Local NGOs working with the government can better identify the most vulnerable families who need assistance. They understand the local context and can ensure programs reach those who truly need them. Local communities need to be involved in project maintenance. For example, training residents on basic road repairs can help maintain the infrastructure built by the government. This fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility for the project's sustainability.

- c. How does the Gombe State government involve local communities in designing World Bank-supported projects?

We hold community consultations and work with local NGOs to gather feedback on project needs and priorities. This ensures projects are relevant and address the specific

challenges faced by different communities. We also work with community leaders to disseminate information about projects. We also have established grievance redress mechanisms so people can voice concerns and seek solutions. lastly, we emphasize building local capacity. We train community members on project maintenance and empower them to manage resources effectively. This fosters a sense of ownership and promotes the continued success of the projects beyond the initial funding period.

Discussion of findings

World Bank-supported projects in Gombe State, targeting infrastructure development, agriculture, and social safety nets, have significantly impacted poverty levels. Infrastructure projects, such as improved road networks and electricity access, have facilitated better market connectivity and economic opportunities. Agricultural initiatives, including training and resource provision for farmers, have boosted productivity and incomes. Social safety net programs, like cash transfers and health services, have directly alleviated poverty and improved living standards. Overall, these interventions have collectively contributed to reducing poverty by enhancing economic activities, increasing access to essential services, and providing direct financial support to vulnerable populations.

The collaboration between the World Bank, Gombe State government, and local communities has been crucial in shaping the design, implementation, and sustainability of poverty reduction efforts. Effective communication and partnership ensured that projects were tailored to local needs and priorities, enhancing their relevance and acceptance. Joint planning and resource sharing facilitated smoother implementation and increased community ownership. Local involvement in monitoring and feedback mechanisms fostered transparency and accountability. This collaborative approach has not only improved the immediate impact of poverty reduction initiatives but also strengthened the capacity of local institutions and communities to sustain these efforts long-term.

Conclusions

The World Bank has played a pivotal role in poverty reduction in Gombe State through targeted projects in infrastructure, agriculture, and social safety nets. By improving access to essential services, enhancing agricultural productivity, and providing direct financial support, these initiatives have significantly alleviated poverty. The success of these projects has been bolstered by strong collaboration with the state government and local communities, ensuring that interventions are effective, relevant, and sustainable in the long term. To maximize its impact, the World Bank must prioritize collaboration with Gombe State's government and local communities. This ensures projects address the state's specific needs and priorities, not a one-size-fits-all solution. Furthermore, the World Bank should focus on context-specific strategies. These involved interventions aimed at youth skills development, microfinance access for small businesses and boosting girls' access to quality education. Finally, robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks are essential. Tracking project progress, measuring impact on poverty levels, and identifying areas for improvement in future interventions allows for continuous learning and adaptation.

Recommendations

The world bank should invest in capacity-building programs for local government officials and community leaders should be intensified to foster greater ownership and sustainability of initiatives. Additionally, the world bank should strengthen partnerships with local NGOs and civil society organizations to enhance community engagement and ensure that interventions are both culturally appropriate and effectively address the root causes of poverty.

Gombe State government, and local communities should establish a formalized multi-stakeholder coordination committee. This committee should include representatives from the World Bank, state government, local community leaders, and relevant NGOs.

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