

## **An Assessment Of The Impediments To The National Poverty Eradication Programme (Napep's) Objectives In**

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**Abstract:** *The main objective of this paper is to assess the impediments that confronted NAPEP in its effort to alleviate poverty in Akwa Ibom State. This is in view of the proposed and subsequent scraping of the agency which was supposed to fight poverty to a standstill by the year 2010 by the government. Although, several projects were executed by NAPEP in a bid to live up to the expectations of its responsibilities but, it was still far from ameliorating the plights of the people. The paper relied on both primary and secondary sources of data, by way of conducting interview and also getting relevant information from the agency. The results of the study revealed that; NAPEP as an agency which was saddled with the sole responsibility of alleviating poverty amongst the populace has not been able to live up to expectations. The failure of the agency to critically address the issue of poverty in the State has been largely attributed to corruption, political interference, poor target mechanism amongst others. The study recommends that, concerted effort should be made to tackle corruption within the agency by ensuring that regular stewardship is demanded from the agency by the Senate or any other body so established to monitor the activities of NAPEP or any other agency that will be created and the issue of poverty alleviation in the country should be seen as a serious business and not a time to reward faithful political servants with appointments.*

**Key words:** NAPEP, poverty alleviation, projects, Akwa Ibom State.

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### **I. Introduction**

The incidence of poverty in Nigeria is said to be alarming, poverty has been seen as a major development problem in Africa and Nigeria in particular. The rising profile of poverty in Nigeria is assuming a worrisome dimension mostly among the rural people. It has been observed that, at least, more than half of the country's (Nigeria) population is living in abject poverty. The publication of the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) now National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reveals that poverty has been massive, pervasive and engulfs a large portion of the Nigerian society. Poverty is one of the forces militating against the social-political and economic development of Nigeria. The poverty experienced by Nigerians is pervasive, multifaceted, and chronic, affecting the lives of a large proportion of the populace, the resultant effects of it include; hunger, disease, ignorance, malnutrition, untimely death, massive corruption, unemployment, frustration, prostitution, increased social vices and unrest, hopelessness, human trafficking, drug trafficking and so on.

The Poverty level in Nigeria is also said to be astronomically high and economically embarrassing considering the fact that Nigeria is endowed with rich human and mineral resources, this has made several writers and institutions describe the country as a paradox where she is blessed with so much natural resources that is enough to cater for the welfare of her citizens yet, the people live in abject poverty and despite several efforts and huge financial commitments that successive governments have committed to alleviating or eradicating poverty in the country, the situation remains the same and has even taken a worrisome and frustrating dimension. (Oshewolo, 2010; Obadan,2001; Ojo, 2008).It is, however, the opinion of many that Nigeria could be rated amongst the richest countries of the world today therefore having no business to do with extreme poverty but, the reverse is the case as the scourge of poverty has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigerian society (Obadan, 2001; Nwaobi, 2003). Available records show that the country since 1960 in an effort to combat poverty has had about fifteen (15) ministries, fourteen (14) specialized agencies, nineteen (19) donor agencies and Non-Governmental Agencies (NGOs) that have also been involved in the fight against poverty(Oshewolo, 2011).

Amongst the various programmes that have been established in time past to tackle the poverty scourge in the country include: Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Free and Compulsory Primary Education (FCPE), Green Revolution (GR), Low Cost Housing (LCH), River Basin Development Authority (RBDA), National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Family Support Programme (FSP),Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and the People's Bank of Nigeria (PBN), the Better Life Programme (BLP), Directorate for Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) amongst others (Forae and Benedict, 2011; Ugoh and Ukpere, 2009).Although, some of the programmes existed as measures that were

undertaken to tackle issues under local government administration but, alleviating the sufferings of the people as a result of poverty was at the center of it. The most recent programme which has also been scrapped by the federal government in 2015 based on the recommendations of the Steve Oronsanye committee report is the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). The programme with all intent and purpose was supposed to alleviate extreme poverty amongst the people but, despite several years of existence the situation remains the same.

Base on the above this paper intends to examine the impediment that confronted NAPEP in the process of carrying out its objectives.

### **Concepts of Poverty**

The concept of poverty is said to lack one single universally acceptable definition, this is due to its multidimensional nature and context specificity. Besides, the poverty phenomenon is situational, it can be meaningfully explained in the context of the historical setting and prevailing circumstances of the country involved (Adams, 2004; Agbor, 2006; Godspower, 2008; Ugoh and Ukpere, 2009). According to the World Bank Report (2002), poverty is the inability to attain a minimum standard of living. Aluko (1975) defined poverty as a lack of command over basic consumption needs. Sen (1987) observed that poverty is the absence of certain capabilities which include largely being unable to participate in ones society with dignity. It is a condition of lack of the necessary resources that is needed to get those material things that make for good living, which may include good food, sound health, shelter and a host of others (Okereke, 2004). From the foregoing it is clear that, poverty denies its victims the basic comfort of life which may be temporal or permanent. It is the inability of an individual or family to at least purchase and own properties or consume that which their hearts desire mostly the basic necessities of life.

Being poor encompasses various aspects. Being poor could be the inability to get full or partial nutritional capabilities. It could also be the inability to avoid premature mortality, to escape from hunger, disease, social depreciation and a host of others (Adams, 2004). Haralambos and Heald (1980) also noted that, a poor person is one who has no access to good housing, food, medical care, and other necessities for maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Okereke (2004) also added that, the poor or a poor person is one who live(s) below the standard that is accepted in the society as good life because they lack the capability to do so. When one is poor, there is every tendency of an individual to be living from hand-to-mouth; this could be very frustrating and demoralising. Anele (2000) citing Galbraith (1969) also pointed that, one is poor when his or her income even if adequate for survival, fall markedly below those of the community.

Asaolu et al. (2006) citing from the Word Bank Report of 1992, agreed that a poor person is one without a job, who cannot help himself or cater for his family, who has no money or business. They further opined that a poor person is described as one who is undernourished and ageing fast, one without self-confidence, looks dirty and lives in filthy environment, one who cannot take care of his family, train them academically and is unable to afford medical bills. Adawo (2010) noted that poverty is experienced by the poor and observed by the rich, but its definition is with difficulty. Adawo agreed with Ekong (1991), that poverty is a concept that has defied a universally acceptable and objective definition or assessment because it is not only an expression of life situation, but equally a state of mind and a perception of self in the complex web of social relation.

In general terms, poverty is considered from two broad perspectives: relative poverty and absolute poverty. Relative poverty is associated with experiencing deviational outcomes from expectations and irrelevant comparison of one's material position with others mostly peers and age groups. Absolute poverty is a misery linked to an insufficient resource base, lack of income, narrow margin, high risk of failure, hunger, disease, etc.

A further look at the concept of poverty leads us to the view of Odumosu (1999) who has identified 3 broad concepts or dimensions of poverty. They include:

- i. Poverty as subsistence
  - ii. Poverty as inequality and
  - iii. Externality concept of poverty.
- i. Subsistence here is concerned with the minimum provisions needed to maintain good health and working capacity. The subsistence definition sees poverty objectively as lack of income needed to acquire the basic or minimum necessity of life. Those who lack the necessities to keep life going are described as poor. However, there are difficulties in determining what constitutes "minimum" which should be the dividing line separating the poor from the non-poor. However the World Bank report specifies that anyone living below \$1 per day is poor.
  - ii. Inequality has to do with the relative position of income groups to each other. Poverty cannot be understood in isolating the poor and treating them as a special group or people. The society is seen as a series of stratified income layers and poverty is concerned with how the bottom layers fare in relation to the society as a whole. Inequality is determined by studying the living standard of the rich in relation to the poor.

iii. The externality concept of poverty as stated by Odumosu deals with the social consequences of poverty for the rest of the society rather than in terms of the poor needs. According to this concept, the people must not be left to become so poor that they now get offended or hate the society. It is not so much the misery and plight of the poor but the discomfort and the resultant effect of it to the community (crime, disease etc), which may be a crucial issue for the society to consider. There is a problem of poverty to the extent that low income creates problem for those who are not poor. Poverty then consists of social problems that are correlated with income. To improve the living conditions of the poor without reducing disutility to the rest of the community may be a sufficient idea. Contributing to the inequality concept of poverty, Atkinson (1983) gave the general meaning of inequality to mean "a situation where income and wealth are simply different". The author argued that in order to assess the implication of the differences in income, it is necessary to establish first, that the people involved are comparable in other relevant respect. The definition of "relevant" is a matter of social judgment, but Atkinson lists some important factors to include the following:

**Resources and Need:** The flow of income received by an individual or the amount he consumes needs to be viewed in relation to the needs which may be represented by such considerations as age, the size of his family and his health. The distribution of income and wealth is, therefore, to be assessed in the light of individual's differences and in terms of needs.

**Tastes and Choices:** Individuals differ in their tastes and choices with regards to work, savings and risk-taking. People with the same opportunities may make different decisions leading to disparities in observed income or wealth. An individual may prefer a job with low income, but such job will allow for short working hours and little responsibility as the case may be, while another may prefer to work for longer hours and earn more income. Invariably the individual that works for longer hours and earns more income will save more wealth on retirement compared to the one who prefers to consume the little he has.

**11 Age and Life Cycle:** The distribution may be influenced by systematic variation of income and wealth over a typical person's life. One person may be richer than the other because he is older and had longer time to save. Individuals may differ in the time that they received their retiring benefits or incomes. One person may choose to go for low earning and accept training to develop on the job.

**Opportunity and Income:** The impact of random chance factors on the distribution means that people who start out with same opportunities may still end up with very different incomes. Once it is established that people have comparable circumstances, attention is focused on the causes of observed differences in income. The question is, can the process by which income is determined be justified as fair? The egalitarian theory of justice may be concerned with the actual differences that are observed in living standards and may see the causes as relevant only when they cast light on possible means of reducing the incidence of poverty.

### **NAPEP and its Objectives**

After the much touted Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) failed to deliver on its mandate of alleviating poverty amongst the Nigerian populace, the alarming heights of the poverty scourge prompted the government to carryout a review on the existing poverty alleviation scheme with the aim of harmonising and improving on them. It is noted that three presidential panels were set up to deliberate on the issue. The panels include: the Presidential Panel on the Rationalisation and Harmonisation of Poverty Alleviation and Agencies which was headed by Alhaji Ahmed Joda; Presidential Technical Committee on the Review of all Poverty Alleviation Programmes headed by Professor Ango Abdullahi and Committees on Youth Policy, concept of the Youth Empowerment Scheme and Blueprint for Poverty Eradication Programme headed by Professor A. B. Aborishade.

It is the findings and recommendations of the presidential panels that led to the formation of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in January 2001, which is also complemented by the National Poverty Eradication Council (NAPEC) whose duty is to coordinate the poverty-reduction-related activities of all the ministries, parastatals and agencies that are involve in the fight against poverty (Obadan, 2001). The NAPEC also has the mandate to ensure that activities are centrally planned, coordinated and complement one another so as to ensure continuity and sustainability, it is the apex policy making body for all poverty eradication activities in Nigeria.

Looking at the Joda Panel and the Abdullahi Committee reports, 14 core poverty alleviation ministries were identified to include: Agricultural and Rural Development, Education, Water Resources, Industry, Power and Steel, Employment, Labour and Productivity, Women Affairs and Youth Development, Health, Works and Housing, Environment, Solid Minerals Development, Science and Technology, Finance and National Planning Commission. In the same vein, thirty-seven (37) core poverty alleviation institutions, agencies and programmes

have also been identified (Obadan, 2001). The NAPEP strategy has been structured to include four (4) sectorized schemes which are:

**Youth Employment Scheme (YES):** The scheme is concerned with providing opportunities in skills acquisition to unemployed youths; create employment and wealth generation, productivity improvement and credit delivery. To achieve its objectives, the scheme has been further sub-divided into Capacity Acquisition Programme, Mandatory Attachment Programme and Credit Delivery Programme.

**Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS):** Its objectives is to ensure the provision and development of infrastructural needs in the following areas: transport, energy, water and communications mostly in the rural areas. The scheme has also been divided into four units; the Rural Transport Programme, Rural Energy Programme, Rural Water Programme and the Rural Communication Programme.

**Social Welfare Service Scheme (SOWESS):** Its aim is to ensure the provision of basic social services, which include: quality primary and special education, strengthening the economic power of farmers, providing primary health care delivery and a host of others. This scheme consists of four broad units; the Qualitative Education Programme, Primary Health Care Programme, Farmers Empowerment Programme and Social Services Programmes.

**Natural Resources Development Conservation Scheme (NRDCS):** The vision of the scheme is to provide participatory and sustainable development of agricultural, mineral and water resources through the following sub-units: Agricultural Resources Programme, Water Resources Programme, Solid Minerals Resources Programme and Environment Protection Programme (Obadan, 2001; Oshewolo, 2010; Godspower, 2008).

The National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) came on board or was established when the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) failed to attain its goals of poverty reduction. Reasons for the establishment of NAPEP amongst other things is to coordinate the activities of other poverty reducing agencies and also help in the fight against poverty, to encourage mass participation in the economic development process etc. The aims/objectives of NAPEP include:

- a. To stimulate economic growth through the engagement of semi-skilled and unskilled labour in productive activities;
- b. To improve the environment/arrest environmental degradation;
- c. To effect immediate reduction of social vices and tensions in the society by removing idle hands from the streets;
- d. To minimize rural-urban drift through the improvement of rural communities;
- e. To commit the fund to direct benefit of the participant rather than on services or over heads and
- f. Above all, to help eradicate extreme poverty by the year 2010.

### **Functions of NAPEP**

The following have been stated to include the functions of NAPEP:

- i. To coordinate all poverty eradication efforts in the federation;
- ii. To monitor all eradication activities of the federal government;
- iii. To maintain a comprehensive and detailed databank on all activities aimed at eradicating poverty in Nigeria;
- iv. To carryout impact assessment of all efforts meant to eradicate poverty in Nigeria and suggest the necessary reviews and policies required to enhance effectiveness and;
- vi. To directly intervene in key sectors of critical needs periodically by implementing scaled key projects.

NAPEP's objectives were clearly spelt out; this was, however, to give it focus and direction. Despite the existence of the NAPEP and its effort to combat poverty amongst the Nigerian populace, its effort was not to be appreciated or good enough as a greater portion of the populace still cry foul of the programme.

### **Organizational Structure of NAPEP**

In order to ensure the effective implementation of the scheme (NAPEP's) objectives, an organizational structure was outlined. The National Poverty Eradication Council (NAPEC) is said to be the apex organ for policy formulation, coordination, monitoring and review of all poverty eradication activities in the country. The President is the chairman of the organ while the Vice-President is the vice chairman. The Secretary to the Government of the Federation is the secretary of the organ, while 14 ministers whose ministries are involved in poverty alleviation activities are members of the organ. The participating ministries in the scheme are those of agriculture and rural development, education, works and housing, women affairs and youth development, industry, science and technology, solid minerals development, water resources, health, power and steel, employment labour and productivity, environment, finance and national planning.

The Chief Economic Adviser to the President and the National Coordinator of NAPEP are also members of the council. The second most important organ in the structure of NAPEP is the National Assessment and Evaluation Committee. This committee, which serves as a forum for regular monitoring of the

activities of NAPEP is chaired by the Vice-President, and draws membership from representatives of the Economic Policy Coordination Committee (EPCC), the National Economic Intelligence Committee (NEIC) the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the National Planning Commission(NPC), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), the World Bank (Nigeria), the United Nations Development Programme (Nigeria) and the European Union (Nigeria). The National Planning Commission is the secretariat of the council. The third organ is the National Coordination Committee, which is chaired by the Federal Coordinator of Programmes and saddled with the responsibility of executing the directives of the National Poverty Eradication Council and ensuring that activities of ministries and agencies involved in the poverty alleviation programme are well coordinated.

The committee also reports to the council, updates on poverty alleviation efforts in the country. Members of this committee are drawn from representatives of the ministries, parastatals and agencies participating in NAPEP who should not be below the rank of director, President of the Nigerian Guild of Editors, President of the Nigerian Labour Congress and President of the Manufacturers' Association of Nigeria. Others are the President of the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA), President of the National Association of Small Scale Industries, President of the Nigerian Employers' Consultative Association (NECA), representatives of registered political parties and the permanent secretary of the National Poverty Alleviation Programme who will serve as the secretary of the committee. There are also state coordination committees in all the 36 states in Nigeria, including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The state coordinating committees have chairmen appointed by the President; the committee is saddled with the following responsibilities:

- a. Coordinate, supervise and monitor the implementation of Federal Government Programmes at the state level;
- b. Provide the mechanism for collaboration between the Federal, State and Local Government areas as well as with the International donor agencies, NGOs and private organizations;
- c. Consider and advice on all matters that are relevant to the successful implementation of the various programmes;
- d. They are also to consider and make appropriate recommendations on new programme initiative and
- e. They were also to prepare and submit monthly reports to the National Coordinator.

Similarly, local government monitoring committees have been established in all the 774 local government areas in the country. The National Poverty Eradication Programme is not under any ministry, parastatals or agency, but these bodies are the major executors of its programmes. NAPEP in turn, also periodically executes what is called intervention projects to complement the efforts of ministries and agencies that are involved in poverty alleviation initiatives (Asaolu, Adereti and Elumilade, 2006).

### **The Various Programmes of NAPEP in Akwa Ibom State**

The table below shows the various programmes of NAPEP that was carried out in Akwa Ibom State in various years.

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of Beneficiaries</b>	<b>Local Government Areas and their Numbers</b>
Keke Napep	2004	34	Uyo – 29; Essien Udim – 2; Ikot Ekpene – 3; Ikot Abasi
Farmers Empowerment Programme	2005	244	Ikot Ekpene – 15; Abak – 18; Ikono – 3; Ini – 3; Orukanam – 8; Essien Udim – 5; Etim Ekpo – 5; Ukanafun – 8; Uyo – 97; Ika – 4; Mbo – 2; Onna – 12; Eket – 18; Ikot Abasi – 13; Nsit Ibom – 7; Urue Offong – 1; Okobo – 4; Ibeno – 4; Itu – 5; Etinan – 6; Uruan – 4; Nsit Atai – 11; Nsit Ubium – 3
Promise Keeper Programme	2006	21	Ibesikpo – 3; Uyo – 9; Onna – 2; Orukanam – 1; Mkpata Enin – 1; Etim Ekpo – 2; Mbo – 1; Itu – 2
M-PMF Multi-Purpose Micro Finance	2007	Cooperative Societies 68	Eket – 4; Eastern Obolo – 1; Abak – 6; Ibesikpo – 5; Essien Udim – 2; Uyo – 36; Itu – 3; Uruan – 1; Orukanam – 2; Nsit Atai – 1; Etim Ekpo – 1; Etinan – 1; Ukanafun – 2; Eket – 2; Oron – 2; Mkpata Enin – 1; Nsit Ibom – 1; Onna – 1
		Associations 8	Uyo – 2; Ibeno – 1; Eket – 2; Itu – 1; Orukanam – 1; Obot Akara – 1
Village Solution Project	2007	Cooperatives 54	Eket – 6; Ikot Abasi – 2; Onna – 4; Urue Offong – 2; Eastern Obolo – 2; Mbo – 2; Ibeno – 2; Ikono – 4; Etim Ekpo – 2; Obot Akara – 2; Ukanafun – 2; Essien Udim – 2; Ikot Ekpene – 2; Oruk Anam – 2; Ikono – 1; Uyo – 34; Ibiono – 4; Nsit Atai – 2; Nsit Ubium – 2; Ibesikpo – 2; Etinan – 2; Uruan – 2; Itu – 2

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COPE	2008	500	10 Local Government Areas
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**Source:** NAPEP Akwa Ibom State (2008).

Besides the above programs, the table below also shows various projects that were executed in the State in 2008.

S/N	Name of Cooperative	Project Type	Location	L.G.A	Amount Received	Date Received	Project Status	Micro Finance Institution
1	Esit Urua Communities Oil and Gas Services	Palm Oil Processing Mill	Esit Urua Village	Eket	6.0m	1/12/08	Work in Progress	MACPEE Micro Finance
2	Ikot Usoekong Blessed Generation	Cassava Processing Mill	Ikot Usoekong Village	Eket	3.0m	1/12/08	Yet to cash cheque	MACPEE Micro Finance
3	Akpautong NALDA Projects MPCS	Palm Oil/Kernel Processing Mill	Akpautong Village	Esit Eket	3.5m	1/12/08	Work in progress	MACPEE Micro Finance
4	Ini Uforo Iban Esene MPCS	Palm/Kernel Processing Mill	Ikpa Nun Asang Village	Ikot Abasi	3.0m	1/12/08	Site cleared	MACPEE Micro Finance
5	Nka Uforo Mkpok Youth MPCS	Palm Oil/Kernel Processing Mill	Mkpok Village	Onna	3.0m	4/12/08	Site cleared	MACPEE Micro Finance
6	JOSAGA(Abiakelib i) MPCS	Cassava Processing Mill	Abiak Elibi Village	Urue Offong	3.0m	1/12/08	Site cleared	MACPEE Micro Finance
7	Friends of Rural Dwellers MPCS	Coldroom/ Fishery	Okoroete	Eastern Obolo	3.0m	Yet to cash cheque	Yet to Start	MACPEE Micro Finance
8	Ekemini Onna Youth MPCS	Cassava Processing Mill	Abat Village	Onna	3.3m	Yet to Receive Cheque	Yet to Start	MACPEE Micro Finance
9	Imeobong Brama Fishries MPCS	Fish Drying Furnance	Ibaka Village	Mbo	1.6m	3/12/08	Site cleared	MACPEE Micro Finance
10	Bright MPCS	Fish Drying Furnance	Iwuochang	Ibeno	1.6m	4/12/08	Yet to cash cheque	MACPEE Micro Finance
11	Ubon Consultative Forum MPCS	Palm Oil/ Kernel Processing Mill	Usuk Obio Ediene Ikono	Ikono	3.0m	7/12/08	Work In Progress	Trinity Micro Finance
12	Ikot Odongo Women MPCS	Cassava Processing Mill	Ikot Odongo	Etim Ekpo	2.4m	6/11/08	Work in Progress	Trinity Micro Finance
13	Ikemesit Nto Umo MPCS	Palm Oil/ Kernel Processing Mill	Ikot Idem Udo	Obot Akara	3.0m	11/11/08	Work in Progress	Trinity Micro Finance
14	Nka Nkori MPCS	Palm Oil/ Kernel processing Mill	Ikot Idem Udo	Ukanafun	3.0m	10/11/08	Site Cleared	Trinity Micro Finance
15	Essien Udim Liberal Minds MPCS	Palm Oil/ Kernel Processing Mill	Ukana Ikot Ntuen	Essien Udim	2.671m	27/10/08	Building Complete	Trinity Micro Finance
16	Mbiaso Development Forum MPCS	Palm Oil/ Kernel Processing Mill	Mbiaso Nto Obioekong	Ikot Ekpene	2.34m	5/11/08	Building Near Completion	Trinity Micro Finance
17	Nka Inemesit Farmers MPCS	Oil Palm Processing Mill	Ikot Ekpuke	Oruk Anam	3.0m	21/11/08	Yet to Commence	Trinity Micro Finance
18	Nung Oku Uruan	Oil Palm Processing Mill	Aka Ekpeme	Ikono	2.8m	7/11/08	Building Completed. Bore hole Provided	Trinity Micro Finance
19	Ntiufan Farmers MPCS	Feed processing Mill	Atan Offot	Uyo	3.5m	5/12/08	Site Cleared. Yet to Cash Cheque	Peace Development Micro Finance
20	Unwana Uya Oron Fishries MPCS	Oil Palm Processing Mill	Ibakang Nsit	Nsit Atai	3.0m	Yet to receive Cheque	Yet to Commence	Peace Development Micro Finance
21	Ikot Ekpenyong Ibiono MPCS	Oil Palm processing Mill	Ikot Ekpenyong	Ibiono Ibom	3.5m	5/12/08	Yet to receive money	Peace Development Micro Finance
22	Ndiya MPCS	Oil Palm Processing Mill	Ndiya	Nsit Ubium	3.0m	1/12/08	Yet to receive Cheque	Peace Development Micro Finance
23	Nung Akpan Progressive MPCS	Integrated Multi Purpose Processing Mill	Afaha Offot	Uyo	3.5m	5/12/08	Yet to receive Cheque	Peace Development Micro Finance
24	Chosen Family MPCS	Oil Processing Mill	Afaha Etok	Ibesikpo Asutan	2.5m	5/12/08	Yet to receive cheque	Peace Development Micro Finance

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2 5	Mboho Ufok Nung Akpan Akpan MPCs	Palm oil/Palm Kernel Processing Mill	Ikot Osukpong	Ibiono Ibom	2.47m	5/12/08	Yet to cash Cheque	Peace Development Micro Finance
2 6	Nka Ima Udo Ama MPCs	Palm Oil/Kernel Processing Mill	Mbribit Itam	Itu	2.5m	5/12/8	Money to be released by Bank	Peace Development Micro Finance
2 7	Etido Ibikpe Uruan Farmers MPCs	Palm Oil/Kernel Processing Mill	Ibikpe	Uruan	3.0m	5/12/08	Yet to receive cash	Peace Development Micro Finance
2 8	Progressive Farmers MPCs	Cassava/ Grains Processing Mill	Mbribit Itam	Itu	2.5m	5/12/08	Money yet to be released by Bank	Peace Development Micro Finance

**Source:** NAPEP Akwa Ibom State(2008).

The table above shows names of cooperatives that have benefited from the Village Solution Projects (VSP) but, a careful survey reveals that most of the cooperatives do not exist or, may had existed for the sole purpose of getting the funds after which they vanished into thin air because most of the cooperatives could not be located in the provided addresses.

The politicization of the entire process as reported by some persons did also led to the exclusion of some communities from benefiting from the projects, and diversion of projects even though they are usually not completed became the order of the day. Those villages whose projects saw the light of day however noted with dismay the poor standard of the project due to improper funding. Although the report shows that some Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society (MPCS) have either received or are yet to receive their cheque and even till now most of the projects have not been completed although, some villages have their project going-on for them but, the general complain is that the projects have not recorded any tremendous success, a case in point is the Palm oil/Kernel processing Mill at Esit Urua village in Eket Local Government Area. The person contacted noted that he is the owner of the processing Mill but someone acted as a third party and promised to ensure that the Mill was given due support by NAPEP unfortunately the much touted help did not come rather, the third party after he must have received funds from NAPEP came and distributed ₦20,000 to him (the owner of the Mill) and other individuals of the cooperative society and according to him (the owner of the Mill) the processing Mill is not functioning and as such has not been able to alleviate the untold hardship hitherto faced by them. But in the fact sheet it is stated that ₦6m (Six million naira) have been received, while the site have been cleared, building and borehole construction are in progress. It is quite obvious from the foregoing that, the individual involved has diverted the money for his private use and there is nothing on ground to corroborate the report in the fact sheet.

In Mbribit Itam the project there is Cassava/Grain processing Mill, the Chairman in charge of the Mill noted that the Mill has not been fully operational besides, the Cassava processing business is seasonal although, NAPEP claimed to must have given out ₦2.5million for the project according to the report on its fact sheet but, the Chairman was quick to state that NAPEP only gave part of the money and the other part never came and they have been struggling to keep the Mill going as the challenges faced by it is enormous. Out of the Cassava season, the Mill is usually shut down as it is usually not operational.

In Atan Offot village in Uyo Local Government Area, another coordinator of a Feed processing Mill also noted that after 6 years the Mill is yet to commence production due to challenges that are beyond it, even though NAPEPs' record shows that ₦3.5million was given out for the project, the coordinator also noted that the money was not up to the stated amount as part of the money is still remaining and as of the time of visitation, nothing has been done about it. In Abiakelibi under Urue Offong/Oruko Local Government Area, the same Cassava processing Mill is being established and the challenges faced by it are not different from the others. In its own case, the proposed site for the project has been cleared but the funds for the project is yet to be received and according to the leader of the Co-operative all effort to get the funds ready for the work has always met with setbacks arising from unavailability of funds.

In Aka Ekpene under Ikono Local Government Area, the co-operative chose Oil Palm Processing where ₦2.8 Million was allocated to the project. As of the time of visitation, the project has been completed and the Mill was working but, the project has not really affected the lives of the people positively. Though it keeps them busy like the director said but the much expected impact has not been felt as business has not been steady. It is pertinent to state clearly that the same complaint also emanates from other project sites, as many of them have not been completed. Even the completed ones have not achieved the much thought off results as they are being confronted with several challenges. The idea was for the projects to be established and get other persons employed besides the management team, but unfortunately this has not come to be as most of the projects have been abandoned.

From the foregoing, it is however obvious that the various strategies of NAPEP including the Village Solution Projects (VSP) have not helped in reducing poverty. For example; Cassava harvesting is usually seasonal including the harvesting of Palm kernel and when this produce are not available, the processing Mill does not work, just like the one in Mbirit Itam, Esit Urua and other locations, at this instance one begins to wonder how the people survive when the Mill which is supposed to help reduce hardship and also enable them meet up with their daily needs is not operational for a while? About 80% of the participants noted that they are yet to receive any reasonable cash from NAPEP since the programme started even though their names have been penciled down amongst the would be beneficiaries of NAPEP especially under Care Of The People programme (COPE). There is no gainsaying that those who reside in the urban areas tend to benefit more than those who reside in the rural areas. Though the urban areas were not left out of the plan but, the NAPEP was meant to focus more on the rural dwellers.

### **Impediments of NAPEP's Objectives in Akwa Ibom State**

Several problems worked against NAPEP from achieving its objectives in Akwa Ibom State, below are some of the problems;

**Poor Funding:** One of the major problems of the agency according to its staff was the issue of poor funding. According to the staff, the agency needs a lot of money for it to effectively carry out its functions so as to attain its objectives. They further observed that not much in terms of financial allocation is being gotten from the government and the delay in releasing money to the agency by the government has also affected their work. Besides the aforementioned, the agency does also face challenges within its organization. For example when loans are given out to beneficiaries and are later collected, the money is usually sent to the headquarters of the agency in Abuja and when it gets there, they usually do not get anything in return which would have helped them give out loans to other individuals and use part for administrative upkeep. The lack of sufficient funds has really hampered the agency from attaining its objectives.

**The issue of corruption:** Corruption has bedeviled various anti-poverty programmes of government including NAPEP. The manifestations and problems associated with corruption in Nigeria have various dimensions. Among these are project substitution, misrepresentation of project finances, diversion of resources, conversion of public funds to private uses, etc (Okoye and Onyukwu, 2007). As observed, lack of accountability and transparency made the programmes to serve as conduit pipes for draining national resources. Thus, the effect of corruption is both direct and indirect on poverty increase. The financial allocation may not be enough for them to execute their much touted programmes but, more often than not, when such meagre allocation gets to the appropriate quarters, tendencies are that; the money will be divided into segments and shared amongst officials before considering anything else.

**Failure to focus on the poor:** NAPEP was designed to circumvent many of the problems of poverty alleviation. However, there have been some lacunas that devalue the programme delivery. In fact, one significant flaw in NAPEP is lack of focus on community education. This is one area where adult education could have come as community education which is one of the important foci of education for poverty alleviation. Ironically, the role of adult and non-formal education in poverty alleviation had not been fully appreciated by the designers of the programme. This can be seen as a fundamental oversight.

**Poor targeting mechanism:** NAPEP was articulated to make life more meaningful for Nigerians. The programme was intended to involve partnering in micro-finance for women and youth empowerment. It was also to collaborate with states and local governments, the private sectors, religious bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOS) to reduce unemployment by creating jobs. However, apart from giving out tri-cycles (keke) to young Nigerians for transport business, there have not been serious and identifiable efforts at empowering the beneficiaries (Youths) with enduring skills. Also, there have not been observable attempts at embarking on extensive farm settlements and elaborate agricultural programmes. As a result, it has lost focus and direction.

There was also the issue of poor implementation of the programme. The severe budgetary and governance problems affected the full implementation of the programmes. It has resulted in facilities and projects either not being completed or broken down and abandoned. Furthermore, inappropriate programme and lack of involvement of beneficiaries in the formulation and implementation had resulted in the unsuccessful implementation of the programmes. Again, given the fact that more women than men are poor, the programme has not made tangible effort to correct this imbalance.

Political and policy interference have undermined the institution's credibility and effectiveness. In other words, their instability has resulted in frequent policy changes and inconsistent implementation which turn out to prevent continuous progress. Also, NAPEP top-ranking officers are political appointees and therefore are subject to political loyalties to those who appointed them. Thus, it is still the usual top down approach and not bottom-up approach as emphasized in the design of the programme. Those who are the helms of affair of the programme are those whom the government has reached out to favour due to the support they got from them during their electioneering period and by so doing, the individuals are also out to favour those whom they are

close to. In other words, the process of selecting beneficiaries for the programme was fraught with nepotism and favouritism thereby directing resources to the wrong persons.

As observed, lack of accountability and transparency made the programmes to serve as conduit pipes for draining national resources. Thus, the effect of corruption is both direct and indirect on poverty increase. According to Dakyes and Mundi (2013) one of the primary aims of NAPEP is to empower the poor to have a voice and therefore a way of expressing their ideas. Unfortunately, such aim is far from being achieved as rural labour force continues to be impoverished and rural – urban migration is on the increase. The reason for the above mentioned according to the authors has been attributed to corruption and mismanagement and this has been a major hindrance to the NAPEP. Most individuals have complained of their inability to benefit from the programme due to the fact that, the leaders are corrupt and have prevented benefits from reaching them. Mismanagement of the programme has opened it up to leakages where unintended beneficiaries benefit from the programme and diversion of benefits to the urban centers and others for personal use by officials. The programme has also been criticised for being concentrated more in the urban areas.

## **II. Conclusion**

The study assesses the impediments that confronted NAPEP in an effort to alleviate poverty amongst the people of Akwa Ibom State. The study reveals that, although NAPEP had had its objectives clearly spelt out but, certain factors especially within the agency prevented it from realizing its stated objectives. Some projects may have been executed in the State but, it is either that they are not properly executed or they are abandoned. The inability of NAPEP to achieve its objectives has been attributed to corruption, political interference, lack of accountability and transparency, poor target mechanism etc. Consequently, the paper recommends amongst other things that frantic effort should be made to tackle corruption within the agency or any agency that will be created after it, by ensuring that periodic accountability is demanded from the agency by the Senate as part of its oversight function or any other body so established to monitor the activities of NAPEP or any other agency that will be created, poverty alleviation programmes should be seen as a serious business and not a time to reward faithful political servants with appointments, proper measures should also be put in place by the agency to target the poor as beneficiaries of the programme.

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