

Challenges of Ending Poverty in Cross River State, Nigeria

Felix Onen ETENG and Bassey E. ANAM,

Department of Public Administration, University of Calabar, Calabar NIGERIA

Institute of Public Policy and Administration, University of Calabar, Calabar NIGERIA

[0176] Abstract

Poverty is an old phenomenon which confronts many people especially rural dwellers. The poor are the ones who suffer hunger, blindness, insecurity and misery in the society. Poverty results in lack of qualitative education, lack of portable water, and inadequate medical facilities in Cross River State. Therefore, ending poverty in the State is a serious and multifaceted business which involves the combine efforts of all stakeholders namely individuals, government, NGOs, Civil Societies and international agencies. Although there are challenges (weak industrial and technological base, and prebendal politics, etc) encountered in attempt to end it, this can be tackled by an integrated approach to the situation. In this study, the survey research method was utilized. Questionnaire and oral interview method was used to obtain information through households and community surveys and this served as a strategic framework that can turn dreams into realities, and goals into strategies.

Keywords: Challenges of ending Poverty, hunger, Poverty, the poor, Poverty in Cross River State.

1. Introduction

Poverty is a condition which is characterized by lack of basic necessities of life. These include: food, shelter, clothes, portable water and good health. Since independence in 1960, the Nigerian experience of poverty as a miserable condition has continued in unprecedented proportion which is alarming. Despite the efforts of many foreign bodies, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the federal government, poverty still persist in the society in an alarming rate resulting in illiteracy, diseases, malnutrition, as well as conflicts even among the existing poor groups due to internal competition. Poverty cast a storm or thundercloud over the people and hinders the fulfillment of individual's desires or aspirations. It causes lack of progress among the people especially socio-economic development. As a hurdle to economic growth, poverty destroys talents; suffocate dreams and changes reality into mirage. It is like a tumor that can likely cause death. Poverty has been the cause of several deaths among pregnant women and infant children due to inability to settle medical bills and the absence of medical personnel in their domain. The weight of poverty calls for urgent public policies that can promote appreciable socio-economic improvement of the people particularly at the grassroots. A good government is measured by its ability to improve the living conditions of the poor. When the government fails to tackle poverty particularly at the rural areas where majority of the people are farmers, such government would deny the citizens the right to live the life they desire or aspire to fulfill.

Generally, the poor in the society are daily confronted with the challenges of lack of skills, lack of economic empowerment, and lack of assistance from the government, relatives or friends. Hardship and sorrows confront the poor in the society on daily basis. Most vulnerable are the aged, those living with HIV and orphans. The poor lack portable water, electricity, good roads, good housing, suffer congestions and even sleep under bridges. Ironically, they tend to have more children with depressing social responsibilities than the rich. In Cross River State (one of the states in Nigeria and is located in the Niger Delta Region of

Sub Saharan Africa) with diverse ethnic groups that span across the eighteen (18) local government areas, the most common phenomenon among the people is poverty. The poor among the people are the ones who live in slumps, suffer from hunger and are commonly afflicted with the disease of blindness. Most surprisingly, a large number of the blind in the state are the poor who in many cases are led by children of school age. This condition negatively affects the children because they are deprived the right to basic education due to the agonizing condition of their parents or relatives. Eteng (2018), in analyzing the poverty condition in the area described it as follows:

You can see it on the walls of our streets. You can notice it in our kind of building and settlement pattern. You can see it on our farm roads within our communities. It is most noticeable in the clothes we wear, in our cooking utensils, in our diet, and the manner the youths address their elders. During rainy season, you can notice poverty in the number of leaking roofs, insect bites, typhoid, and malaria infections (Eteng & Agbor, 2018, Opara et al., 2023). Poverty is usually caused by multiple factors which may be economic, social or lack of political/administrative will. The inability to fashion an appropriate framework to tackle the problem of poverty using adequate resources is responsible for the persistent of poverty in the society. It is unfortunate that a State that is rich in mineral resources such as limestone, rubber, cocoa, crush rock and other food crops like yams and cassava can paradoxically be poor. This lamentable condition has however been handled in the past through strong collaborations between the State and the federal government by introducing several anti-poverty schemes in the State. Some of these anti-poverty programmes include: Better Life for Rural Women, Operation Farewell to Poverty, and the establishment of Community Banking System or the Microfinance Banks at the grassroots. Despite these measures by the State government, the weight of poverty continued unabated in the area. Although scholars (Opara et al., 2024, Obadan 1997, Eteng & Hillary 2016, Ndiyo 2008, Anam & Eteng 2018) have made useful suggestions about the measures to utilize in handling the problem of poverty such as high economic growth performance and good governance, poverty still exist in the State as many families can hardly feed or have access to qualitative education. Many are unable to settle medical bills that accrue to them due to poverty. The question is: Why is poverty still prevalent in Cross River State? Is the problem so great that the State government lack the resources to tackle it? What are the challenges of ending poverty in the State? These and other questions will be addressed in this study. The skill to handle these issues successfully in the study will form the basis for this research.

Discourse on poverty in Cross River State: Poverty is better imagined than experienced. It is a sorrowful condition in which those who are poor are exposed to several miserable conditions and deprivations. This condition sometimes degenerates into aggressive behaviour because of frustration. In poverty, one may lose friends or close relatives and may be socially stigmatized as “nobody”. The reality of poverty exists when one begins to look for help from others. Under this situation, nobody wants to render assistance because of the fear of inability to pay back or the fear of establishing an unwanted burden of relations.

In Cross River State the poor lack friends. They lack access to qualitative education, portable water supply, quality health services, and electricity supply. These basic needs that are intended to improve the quality of life of the poor are in acute short supply. The result is that the citizens become frustrated as the promise made to them by the politicians at each period of political campaigns cannot be fulfilled. These unfulfilled promises create gaps that are yet to be filled in the socio-economic live of the people. Similarly, the poor lack portable water supply. In the villages they rely on streams or rivers as major sources of water supply. In the cities, the poor heavily depend on water from borehole that is often contaminated by the underground sewage system resulting in water borne diseases like typhoid. This is a regrettable condition which the poor have no power to change unless the government intervenes. Generally, the poor suffer from lack of food and neglect. The vast majority of the poor lack property and have no roof over their heads. They lack the land to cultivate crops for family use. In some cases, where land is available, the soil fertility of such land has lost its value. This condition is made worst by the challenges of climate change in the area.

The result is that many of these people particularly the youths migrate to the neighbouring states of Ebonyi and Akwa Ibom States for sustainable life process. The inability to fulfill this hope leads many into armed robbery and other crimes. Crimes and other offences reported to the police in Cross River State between 2009 and 2011 include: Armed Robbery 107, Theft 1067, Assault 1017, False Pretence/Cheating 314, Breach of Public Peace 137, Gambling 22, House Breaking 58, Burglary 101, Murder 210, Suicide 20, Kidnapping 12 (Eteng, 2015). This condition shows the difficult moment and the depravity of the poor which still continues till today.

Most communities lack access roads. In some villages, movement from one rural settlement to another is done through the narrow forest path or through the use of canoes in the riverine areas of the state. In many cases, the poor have been attacked to death by wild animals or bitten by snakes while walking through these narrow foot paths. The State Government Rural Road Programme which was intended to reach every community by the year 2015 failed to achieve this goal due to prebendal politics that was used by the political class in the choice of the community that should benefit from the road project. Consequently, many rural areas are still in the wood and are yet to benefit from the government rural road programme.

One of the greatest agonies facing the poor in the area is the problem of access to qualitative education. Qualitative education in the state looks gleam as many school children are out of school because of the inability of parents to pay their school fees. Many of these children who are out of school gradually resort to hawking along the streets, firewood breaking for petty financial gains and are load carriers in the market places in order to feed. The dream for a free and compulsory educational system in the state at both primary and secondary level is still a mirage and an unfulfilled promise by the government. The rich register their children in big private schools while the children of the poor attend public schools and sometimes without school uniform or shoes. In most cases, the poor in public schools go to school without breakfast. Although, at present the state government in collaboration with the federal government is embarking on School Meal Programme to cater for children in the public primary schools, yet the quality of service and the quantity of food given to the school children is grossly inadequate. In many cases, three to five children share an egg ones or twice a week. This lamentable poor situation merely amounts to under feeding rather than reducing hunger which is one of the main challenges among poor school children.

The poor in the state live in cluster of houses without adequate security. Armed robbers and other hoodlums easily have access to their dwelling places. They are the ones who mostly suffer from noise and environmental pollution. In most cases, they sleep late and awake early in order to meet up with the challenges of life. When they are faced with life obstacles, they lack where to go for assistance. The poor suffer greatly from heat stress of the sun with such affliction like cancer of the skin, and other forms of health hazards. When it rains, the poor deserve sympathy because of leaking roofs that most often cause them to be sleepless at night. This condition increases their agony in life. Indeed, trees have more hope than the poor because they grow without toiling.

Policy response: Based on the alarming poverty condition in the state, the state government at periodic adjustment has in collaboration with the federal government of Nigeria embarked upon several poverty reduction programmes to cushion the effect of poverty among the people. Some of these anti-poverty programmes that are targeted to improve the conditions of the poor include: Back-to-land programme, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), Primary Healthcare Programme (PHC), Establishment of Community Banks, Establishment of People's Bank of Nigeria, National Urban Mass Transit Programme, Better Life for Rural Women, Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS), Green Revolution Programme, National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA), Integrated Agricultural and Rural Development Project, Nomadic Education Programme, Guinea Worm Eradication Programme (Bassey & Ndiyo, 2017)

However, despite these laudable anti-poverty reduction programmes introduced by government to reduce poverty in the area, these various anti-poverty mechanisms yielded no corresponding effect but rather suffered a colossal failure due to weak industrial and technological base, prebendal politics, low productivity, unemployment, etc. The result is that a state of “vicious cycle of poverty” is created and gets deepened daily thereby frustrating the aspirations of the people.

2. Literature Review

It is sometimes essential to attempt a summary of the results of previous academic studies that scholars have carried out on the subject matter of this study. By assessing the existing knowledge of our inquiry, it will not be difficult to identify discernable ideas that tend to support or possibly fill the missing gap between this study and other scholarly work. Through this effort, one can clearly know what value this study can contribute to what is already known about the problem of poverty in Cross River State. Poverty: The study of poverty has attracted scholarly concern because of its impact on the teeming population in Cross River State. Generally, people consider poverty as a condition where an individual is not able to meet his basic necessities which may be relative or absolute. These basic necessities of life include: food, shelter, health, clothes, income and education.

Obikeze & Anthony (2004) defined poverty as “the absence of the capacity to acquire the means to sustain a standard of living”. This however, will involve the ability to participate with dignity in society. In Cross River State, where about eighty (80) percent of the populations are rural dwellers, there is virtually absence of these capabilities or capacity to maintain a minimum standard of living. This condition of poverty is summarized by Odumosu as follows:

Starvation and death stare at his face as in medieval times. Indeed, time have not changed since the Dark Ages. And as though these afflictions were not enough, it is he – and this is the greatest agony of all – who gives birth to the largest number of children thus spreading and multiplying misery to a dark universe of destitution. When death comes to him finally, he seems to be happier than those he has left behind him. (Odumosu, 1996) The World Bank (2000) examined poverty as the inability to attain a minimum standard of living in society which includes inability to eradicate hunger, stress, poor hygienic conditions, as well as inadequate healthcare delivery system (cited in Ukerto & Ezekiel, 2006). This condition is real in Cross River State. Obasanjo & Mabongunje (2010) in trying to conceptualize poverty classified it into three categories: poverty of ideas, poverty of courage, and poverty of material well-being (cited in Ivbijaro, 2012). They maintained that “of these functional categories, the poverty of material well-being is the most precarious, having a very harmful and dehumanizing effect on the rural poor” (cited in Ivbijaro, 2012).

However, despite the above conceptual review of scholarly work on poverty, it is imperative to examine in empirical terms what most scholars have attempted to evaluate and analyse concerning certain development projects that tend to highlight what had been experimented in some other parts of the globe as an effort to end poverty. Most of these studies were sponsored by the World Bank and other International bodies. The study on the road project in Vietnam helps to make it easier to understand the extent to which the creation of rural roads can result in the improvement of the living conditions of the rural households in order to end poverty. The study was carried out by Van de Walle and Dominique (1999) for the World Bank. The study which was titled “Assessing the Poverty Impact of Rural Road Projects” was aimed at improving the well-being of rural households and give new face value to the existing roads and bridges so as to improve the lives of the people. The result of the evaluation was impressive in that the programme created more employment and gave hope to the people through wealth creation among rural dwellers. The Bangladesh Microfinance project was established to assist poor households and farmers in various communities so as to obtain loan for wealth creation. The aim was to improve their living conditions. Sponsored by the World Bank, the evaluation study by Morduch and Jonathan (1998) was conducted in 1998 titled “Does Microfinance Really Help the Poor? New Evidence from Flagship programmes in

Bangladesh". Useful data for the study were made easily available through the assistance of the Bangladesh Institute for Development Studies. The study made use of households and farmers as experimental group while a second category (control group) was without Microfinance assistance. The outcome of the evaluation showed that those who benefited from the programme were those outside the target groups. This was primarily due to bias in the choice of beneficiaries of the project because of the existence of prebendal practices. The process of not targeting correctly the beneficiaries and the use of prebendal criterion for loan procurement was one of the problems that marred the success of the programme.

Finally, the policy of land reform programme in Zimbabwe which involved the targeting of poor farmers for government assistance; Indonesia poverty eradication programme by government in the form of adjustment programme involving increase in social expenditure; and the various poverty eradication programmes adopted in Chile were calculated attempts by various government worldwide to end poverty among the people.

3. Methodology:

The descriptive research design is adopted to collect data from secondary and primary sources. The secondary sources include: documentary studies, journals, textbooks, internet services and information on facilities and services. The primary sources include: interviews, group discussions and observations. The study utilized the survey research method. Accordingly, the sources utilized were household surveys and community surveys. Based on the nature of the study, and the characteristics of the respondents, the following data were obtained through the household surveys: household size and location, occupational activities and employment status, production and output, health status and nutritional value as well as education. Community surveys involve collecting information on the available facilities and services in the various communities.

In this study, twelve (12) local government areas were selected out of the eighteen (18) local government areas in the State. Four (4) local government areas were selected from each of the three senatorial districts through a random sampling method. The aim is to ensure that every local government area has equal chances of being selected in the study. In the Northern Senatorial District, Ogoja, Obudu, Bekwarra, and Yala local government areas were selected. In the Central Senatorial District, Yakurr, Abi, Ikom, and Etung local government areas were chosen. In the Southern Senatorial District, Biase, Odukpani, Calabar South, and Bakassi local government areas were selected. The stratified sampling method was utilized in selecting sample for the study. The selection of the twelve (12) local government areas utilized for the study was made by listing on papers the names of the eighteen (18) local government areas that make up the State. Each local government was listed in pieces of paper and rolled into small paper balls in a container thoroughly mixed. From this, the number of local government areas needed was blindly picked. This method was also used in the choice of communities in the selected local government areas. From the selected local government areas, out of the total population of 1,471,967 (National Population Commission, Abuja, 2006), one thousand two hundred (1,200) respondents were chosen through a stratified sampling method. Out of these, one hundred (100) respondents were selected from each local government area. The selection was deliberate so as to get the actual respondents for the study. The selected respondents include: farmers, artisans, unemployed, civil servants and petty traders. Based on the sampling size above, the study utilized a stratified sampling method to further classify the sampling size into groups using the following distribution quota: farmers 300, unemployed 500, petty traders 200, artisans 120 and civil servants 80. In all these, a research questionnaire was sampled and the total number of people in the sample was one thousand two hundred (1,200). However, of this number, 1100 completed and returned the questionnaire while one hundred (100) could not return the questionnaire thus giving the attrition rate of 8.33 percent.

Strategic Framework for Ending Poverty in Cross River State: The need to end poverty in Cross River State is so vital and requires urgent attention or action. Ending poverty requires the combine efforts of all stakeholders (individuals, government, non-governmental organizations, civil societies and international

donor agencies). Therefore, to turn dreams into realities, the following strategic framework is suggested as a machinery to end poverty in the State.

Expansion in industries: It is difficult to end poverty when the rate of unemployment in the State is very high. Unemployment results in social unrest, youth restiveness and other forms of social vices which are inimical to the society. Therefore, to end poverty in Cross River State, there is need for expansion in industries. This will create jobs and employment opportunity for the teeming unemployed population in the State. It also requires a strong budgetary allocation to achieve the goal.

Infrastructural development: Infrastructural development is essential for growth and economic development. A well-developed infrastructure is absolutely imperative for ending poverty in Cross River State. This condition needs sufficient budgetary allocation to make it a reality and successful. Infrastructural development gives impetus to Research and Development (R&D). The miracles in the Asian countries of China and Malaysia in agriculture have been attributed to infrastructural development that served as a stimulus to encourage agricultural practices in the area through enabling environment, incentives and facilities provision. Generally, in order to promote infrastructural development in the State, government policy should be targeted towards a strong budgetary provision that will provide the ground for sustainable development process in agriculture in order to reduce poverty in Cross River State.

Economic diversification: This requires developing a wider range of skills, interest and products in order to achieve greater success and reduce the risk of poverty. In agricultural practices, local farmers need to be encouraged to go into the production of new variety of crops and farming skills. The use of fertilizer, irrigation agriculture, incentives and planting improved variety of crops tend to reduce poverty through sufficient food supply. In terms of the industry, local industries should be encouraged in the production of new improved varieties of products. Import substitution policy should be vigorously pursued as an integral industrial policy. Newly established industries should be given “tax holiday” for a minimum period of seven or ten years to enable them plunge back part of their profits so as to cater for future equipment breakdown and subsequent replacement of obsolete equipment.

Rural development: This is an important dimension which requires removing all obstacles on the path of the gradual growth of the State in order to become advanced like other States. The process involves deculturalization, alteration as well as deforestation process of the area. The rural development process needs an integrated approach which must be holistic in order to provide the necessary tools for the rural dwellers to participate in the economic, social or political aspirations and development of their areas. This will certainly boost agricultural practices and encourage local industries and talents. This situation often results in creating subsidiary industries for skill development and poverty reduction. Also, through rural industrialization, rural captive markets can be created for rural agricultural products and raw materials. This shall in turn improve the living conditions of the poor thereby reduce poverty. Enough incentives, infrastructure and loan facilities should be given to rural dwellers so as to promote bumper harvests in their localities. In Tanzania, president Nyerere introduced the Ujamaa declaration as a new approach to national development so as to reduce the level of dependency on the western imported goods. This has helped the country in food supply and collectivization process which further enhanced productivity. Although, there were problems, yet Cross River State government can build on these short comings to evolve a veritable agricultural practice that is capable of ending poverty in the near future.

Employment creation: This approach is aimed at reducing unemployment and providing gainful employment opportunities to those who are unemployed or underdeveloped. Employment creation provides income to households through direct access to the labour market. Unfortunately, many people are excluded from meaningful or gainful employment because of lack of skills and lack of basic education. It is therefore advisable that those who lack the opportunity to be gainfully employed in government can resort to farming where they can be assisted by the government to increase earnings in order to eliminate poverty among households and communities in Cross River State.

Empowerment: This strategy is aimed at giving people the power to have control over their lives or situations which they find themselves and possibly avoid being dependent on others or government. It requires providing skills, assistance, and vocational training to households, groups and community base associations. This is often an effective measure for wealth creation that tends to reduce poverty among households in Cross River State. The use of commercial tricycles, buses, and providing apprenticeship to deserving citizens helps to eliminate household poverty. It is needful however, that after the required training, the people be assisted by the government or elites in the society to acquire the necessary tools to carry out their businesses which they have obtained through training. The situation where trainee lack the necessary tools after the period of apprenticeship to establish their independent business amounts to having skills without jobs and can result in poverty. Empowerment helps people to cope with failure and challenges of life. Through empowerment, survival skills like build makeshift shelter or purify water are easily acquired. These survival skills tend to help in precarious situations. Interestingly, empowerment provides the opportunity to make the most out of life situation. It provides the required capacity to adapt and survive in a changing world that is constantly filled with daunting demands. It enables individuals to maintain and manage a quality life that helps to reduce if not eliminate poverty through sustainable life processes. **Entrepreneurship:** This method requires the acquisition of practical skills in various fields of endeavours such as fashion and design, photography and video coverage, cosmetology, welding and fabricating, paint production and catering. These various skills empower the citizens to become job creators rather than seekers of jobs. They in turn become employers of labour. This useful strategy helps to redirect the citizens toward practical reality and innovation in wealth creation. It gives them a high sense of value in the face of a target audience. It also enables the citizens to be self-reliant, and promotes viable business innovation despite the financial risk involved.

Building resilience: Many people in Cross River State have been devastated due to the shocking experiences of their lives. There have been reported cases of ill health, sufferings and poverty as well as several miserable conditions exposed to them. These shocks and mental injury that have been planted in the hearts of the people causes many to live in misery which is difficult to forget. However, citizens deserve better living conditions so as to improve themselves and avoid such unpleasant experiences. To this end, government should provide adequate healthcare services whose cost should be affordable and the quality of services be in line with the international best health practices. This requires adequate budgetary allocation to cater for the provision of health services in the various areas. Budgetary provisions should also be made for essential public utilities like water, public toilets, and electricity. The poor and the unemployed should be assisted monthly by small stipend as wages to live on. This should be done through proper targeting of households or communities living in poverty. In most cases, targeting should also be done in major social sector spending like education. This method requires a correct identification of the beneficiaries in order to achieve the expected result. Social programmes like school meal, and micro credits should be expanded to include a community base approach especially among resettlement centres or those living in river flooded areas.

Role of NGOs and Civil Societies: The Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) are private organizations that show interest and pay attention towards the sufferings of people with the aim to reduce these sufferings by providing essential social services that promotes community welfare and development. They are not profit oriented and solely depend on aids, voluntary donations and charitable services. Osuntogun (1996) maintained that NGOs are “catalyst for making sustained interventions that promotes self-directing, self-financing, locally accountable institutions capable of initiating the process of people centered development at the grassroots” (cited in Ndiyo, 2008).

The main functions of NGOs include: i) Infrastructural development at the grassroots. ii) Provides training and technical assistance for community development. iii) Gives support to community initiative and innovation by introducing new ideas or ways of doing things. iv) Tends to provide linkages in terms of communication between the government and the citizens.v) Promotes research and ensure adequate

evaluation process and monitoring techniques. vi) They speak in favour of the poor by supporting public plans and actions that can alleviate the conditions of the deprived. Civil Societies on the other hand provide essential services to the needy especially those that cannot be reached by government or have been neglected or have not been positively impacted upon by the business of government. They device several participatory methods to obtain better results in areas where public and private sectors have failed to record good success in providing basic services to the people.

The following are some of the roles of CSOs in reducing poverty: i). They add value to government effort and other agencies of development in order to make the process of development more transparent. This encourages local participation. ii) They instill confidence in the minds of the people. This strengthens them particularly the low income citizens. iii) They utilize local resources to assist the poor. iv). They provide communication gap between the government and the beneficiaries. v) They promote training and capacity building of the local people.

Challenges of ending poverty in Cross River State: A number of factors are responsible for the persistence of poverty in Cross River State. Some of these factors are environmental, cultural, historical or man-made depending on the era in which one lives. In most cases, this problem may be chronic or transitional but whichever way, the following challenges make it difficult to end poverty in Cross River State

Weak industrial and technological base: This is the bane of ending poverty in Cross River State. This condition is caused by the policy of Import Substitution Industrialization development model which places emphasis on wholesale importation (example spare parts) and subsequent assembling of these spare parts or raw materials under a “manufacturing platform” (Bassey & Ndiyo, 2017). Thus, instead of the state developing a strong industrial and technological base through Research and Development (R&D) or a strong infrastructural base, government rather spent most of the state motivational resources on sports, football or tourism activities. This condition does not favour industrialization process.

Prebendal Politics: Prebendal Politics is one of the reasons why nations fail in tackling poverty problem. In Cross River State, although the elites in the society are aware of the existence of poverty, yet they fail to record good success in the attempt to tackle the problem. Part of the reason is bad government often expressed through „god fatherism” in selecting those who benefit from government or get assistance from international bodies. Many people who occupy positions in government see their newly found political appointments as opportunity to favour members of their families, relations or tribal kinsmen (Eteng & Omenka (2016)).In some other cases, politicians prefer to create social structures that can help them during electioneering campaigns. In view of this, opportunities like employment, skill acquisition, contract award, and award of scholarships are exclusively preserved for party supporters and village brothers or sisters. This social condition has continued to deprive the ordinary citizens or communities (that lack persons in government) from gaining access to social benefits from the state thereby subjecting them to chronic poverty with nobody to assist them to come out of this condition of destitution.

Lack of skills: Lack of skill is responsible for unemployment especially among youths. In Cross River State, education in most institutions of learning is theory oriented without practical skills. This makes most youths and other older people to solely depend on white collar jobs that are in short supply. In some cases, people hardly correlate cause and effect and this affects their choice of career opportunities. Vocational education with skills is lacking among the vast majority of the people. This results in unemployment causing poverty which is hard to reduce. Survival skills like vulcanizing, tailoring, hairdressing, laundry services and dry cleaning are generally looked down upon by many people. People consider these jobs as menial and without dignity. Consequently, many especially the youths continue to remain unemployed with no means to better their poverty conditions.

Low productivity: Productivity is measured by output. In Cross River State, majority of the poor are rural farmers with low productivity. This prevalent condition exists because of several factors. First, expenditure on the social sector is low and this affects government provision of essential service supply in

terms of water, electricity and healthcare delivery that are needed to promote good health among the people in order to increase productivity through healthy living. Secondly, budgeting provisions are low and this situation creates gaps that are very difficult to operate resulting in disjointed conditions of the production processes. Finally, lack of storage facilities, lack of skills, loss of soil fertility value, limited resources, ignorance and low income contribute to low productivity in Cross River State.

Unemployment: This is a cardinal determinant of poverty. Even those who are underemployed also suffer from “income poverty”. Many factors are responsible for this condition of unemployment. These include ill health, poor educational qualification, lack of skills, and discrimination in terms of tribe or geographical location. Unemployment is largely suffered by the youths. This is why in any advertisement for recruitment into the formal sector one finds unemployed youths queuing for jobs desperately.

Family size: This is one of the major causes of poverty in Cross River State. People with large family sizes suffer poverty more than those with small family sizes. The prevalent conditions of unemployment have kept many husbands and wives at home. With idle time and high fertility rate, the family size kept increasing without a correspondent income value to tackle certain logistics that may arise in the family. This condition usually creates problems that result often in poverty. Continuous pressure from family problems can shorten one's life process especially among people who operate extended family system.

Way forward: Despite the challenges of ending poverty in Cross River State, it is essential to provide the way forward to ending poverty. This will help to improve the conditions of the people especially at the grassroots. The following therefore are suggestions as way forward to the challenges of ending poverty in Cross River State:

Provision of industrial and technological base: This is where agonies are felt because of lack of political/administrative will to embark on industrial and technological development in the State. A strong industrial and technological base can be achieved through Research and Development (R&D). Similarly, the establishment of infrastructures as a necessary base for industrial growth is a tool for development. Japan and China adopted this strategy to become leading industrial nations in Asia.

Provision of social amenities and secured business environment in the State: The core poor in Cross River State reside in rural areas. Therefore, it is necessary for the government to provide essential social amenities and services at the grassroots to enhance the socio-economic well being of the people. These amenities include: health facilities, pipe borne water, electricity, rural sanitation, education, road network and other welfare programmes that are essential for common good. In addition, adequate security should be provided to ensure safety for both residents and investors in the State.

Provision of extensive services to boost agricultural production: Agriculture is the main economic activity of rural dwellers in the State. However, production remains at subsistence level because the production capacity of the people is limited by knowledge and farm resources. Through farm extension services, the farmers can be trained on emerging farm technology, mechanization, use of variety of seeds, fertilizer and other farm inputs to increase yield. This will have a significant impact on food security, commercial production, savings, increase in investment as well as improved lifestyle among rural farmers in Cross River State.

Building skills and capacity for self-reliance: Entrepreneurial skills and training to enhance the capacity of rural dwellers especially among the youths will help to rescue the poor from poverty. The aim is to train the poor on income generation and employment enhancement skills that are essential to their social and economic environment. Commonest among these skills include: welding, carpentry, haircut and dressing, masons, mechanics, etc. To compliment this, there must be access to credit facilities from the microfinance banks to rural entrepreneurs. The government must on its part ensure a friendly tax policy to help young businesses grow in the State.

Birth control through effective family planning: It has been observed that the population of Cross River State grows at geometric progression. The birth rate in rural areas of the State is daily on the increase. This affects the chances of families to grow out of poverty. Birth control is necessary to check excess delivery of children in the midst of inadequate family resources and feeding. Counseling services which play a key role in achieving this goal in the State should be made available to all family heads and married couples.

5. Conclusion:

This paper examined the challenges of ending poverty in Cross River State, Nigeria. The major challenges include: weak industrial and technological base, prebendal politics, lack of skills, unemployment, family size, and low productivity. Other challenges include: lack of qualitative education, poor health care delivery, increasing level of insecurity as well as lack of infrastructure which affects businesses and investment in the State. Despite these challenges, this paper presents the following suggestions as a way forward to the study: This include: strong industrial and technological base, provision of social amenities and secured business environment in the State, provision of extensive services to boost agricultural production, building skills and capacity for self-reliance, and birth control through effective family planning.

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Biographical Note

Felix Onen ETENG, *PhD*, is a Lecturer in the Department of Public Administration, University of Calabar, Calabar NIGERIA. He specializes in development studies. Email: felixoneneteng@gmail.com

Bassey E. ANAM, *PhD*, is a Lecturer in the Institute of Public Policy and Administration, University of Calabar, Calabar NIGERIA, He is a public policy expert. Email: basseyanam@gmail.com