# Assessment of Poverty Level of Fadama III Participants in Benue State

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**Abstract**

*Poverty reduction programmes have to a large extent, failed to achieve set targets in Nigeria. A review of massive literature on poverty reduction revealed that the spate of failure of the poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria has strong linkages with the conventional top-bottom approach adopted in the process of implementation. The World Bank assisted Third Fadama Development Programme, also called Fadama III has adopted the widely recommended bottom-top approach to address the problem of poverty in Nigeria. This study assessed the poverty level of Fadama III participants in Benue State. The cohort survey design was adopted to select 400 participants of Fadama III programme from six Local Government Areas of Benue State. Questionnaire, Focus Group Discussion, interviews and personal observation were the instrument used for data collection. Findings showed that Fadama III adopted a unique approach in engaging with participants individually and the host communities. Specifically, the successful strategies emplyed by the programme in Benue State were the Community-Driven Development (CDD) or Bottom-Top approach, as well as the soft terms and conditions. Additionally, results showed that capacity building is the most profound impact of the Fadama III programme in Benue State. However, three challenges were encountered in the Fadama III programme in Benue State and include delay in payment of counterpart funds by Benue State Government, non participation of members in policy discussions and conflicts among members of user groups. Based on these results, it was therefore recommended among others that development and poverty reduction programmes in developing countries should borrow a leaf from the World Bank's Community Development or Bottom-Top approach as well as the soft terms and conditions used in the implementation of Fadama III Development Programme in Benue Sate.*
***Keywords***: *Poverty level, Fadama III, Participants, Bottom-Top approach.*

## Introduction

*Fadama* I, II and III programmes were implemented in Nigeria with a view to stemming poverty that has pervaded the country's economy. There is in fact, no gain emphasizing that poverty is among the major problems confronting developing countries today and is at the centre of development policy. Almost half

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the world population (over 3 billion people) live on less than 2.50 US Dollars per day. According to the statistics, about one billion children live in poverty (1 in 2 children in the world), 640 million live without adequate shelter, 400 million have no access to safe water, 270 million have no access to health services, 10.6 million dies before they reach the age of five (or roughly 29,000 children per day) (United Nations Development Programme, 2015).

It is therefore, not a surprise that the World Bank chose the theme of "Attacking poverty" for its 2004 Development Report in which it estimated that, of the world's 6 billion people, 2.8 billion live on less than two US dollars a day and 1.2 billion on less than one US dollar per day. It further stressed that of the 1.2 billion who live on less than a dollar per day, 23.3 per cent were in sub-Saharan Africa. Poverty therefore, has become an important topic of discussion among world leaders. This was reflected in the theme of World Vision 2020 conference held in Uganda (Folayan, 2013).

The United Nations General Assembly in 2000 summarized the development goals agreed upon at various international conferences and world summit during the 1990s and tagged it the "Millennium Development Goals" (MDGs) with reducing extreme poverty and hunger by half by the year 2015 as the first among the eight-point targets (Vincent, 2006). Following the 2015 deadline of Millennium Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), otherwise known as Global Goals, were developed by the United Nations at the United Nations Sustainable Development summit on 25 September 2015 labelled "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", which included a set of 17 SDGs to end poverty in all its ramifications everywhere as its first goal.

The incidence of poverty in Nigeria has been high and widespread; official statistics have shown a consistent and pervasive incidence of poverty in the country. The Nigerian Government has attempted to reverse the trend of rising poverty rate through intervention programmes such as Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Back to Land, National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Seven Point Agenda and Transformation Agenda, among others, but the evidence on ground points to the fact that "the poverty 'virus' is getting more entrenched Ikwuba (2011) and Oluranti (2011).

Poverty reduction policies put up by the government have been institutionally driven; requiring several bureaucratic processes and stages for implementation. This eventually hinders the achievement of full potential, and the final end result – poverty reduction. Hence, rather than adopt the conventional top-bottom approach to poverty reduction, it has become pertinent to grapple with a bottom-top approach so as to remove the bureaucracy that hinders direct impact on the targeted beneficiaries. *Fadama III*, a World Bank programme adopted the bottom-top approach that has been recommended as panacea for poverty reduction in the country.

In Benue State in particular, the socio-economic indices are also very disturbing, as poverty has been on the increase. With only 1% extremely poor and 21% moderately poor in 1980, these figures rose to 25% extremely poor and 39% moderately poor in 1996. In 2003, 65% of Benue people were living below the poverty line, less than (US $1 per day) (Benue State Statistical Agency, 2018). Also, 32.9 percent of Benue residents were living in poverty as at September, 2020, with those classified as very poor at 12.6 percent. The per capital income of a Benue State resident was 1, 592 US dollars and adult literacy rate of 67.6 percent (Benue State Statistical Agency, 2018). Akighir (2011) stressed that Benue State was ranked the 8th poorest of the 36 States of the Federation in 2010.

The current statistics on poverty in Nigeria in general and Benue state in particular are still a source of worry to stakeholders and the citizenry in general. Statistics from the World Bank (2022) shows the multi-dimensional poverty results of people living in Nigeria at 65% which translates to 133 million people (which is above the 26% threshold required as minimum for a decent standard of living), out of which 72% live in the rural areas as compared to 42% who live in the ubran areas. States with the highest incidents of poverty are Sokoto, Bayelsa, Gombe, Jigawa and Plateau. Benue State with poverty rate of 31.2% (World Bank, 2022) is still characterized by high incidence of poverty.

It has therefore become pertinent to find out if the programme with its bottom-top approach has impacted significantly on poverty in Benue State where it has been widely implemented. What therefore

prompted the study is therefore to find out what was the general level of poverty before the year 2008 when the programme commenced and what has been the level of poverty in Benue State after the implementation process of *Fadama III* programme was completed, and in what specific areas was the impact mostly felt and what category of individuals benefitted more from the programme. To this end, this study posits to assess the poverty level of Fadama III participants in Benue State.

**Research Questions**

Two research questions guided this study and include;
- i. How do the implementation strategies of *Fadama III* programme affect the performance of its components in Benue State?
- ii. What are the problems militating against the success of *Fadama III* programme in Benue State?

## Materials and Method

The study employed the cohort survey design to select 400 participants of Fadama III programme from six Local Government Areas. Questionnaire, Focus Group Discussion, interviews and personal observation were the instrument used for data collection. Descriptive statistical tools including tables, charts, pictures, frequency counts and simple percentages were used for data analyses.

## Results and Discussion

**Implementation Strategies Adopted by *Fadama III* Development Programme in Benue State.**
The focus of this section is to examine the implementation strategies adopted by *Fadama III* development programme in Benue State as outlined in objective one. The essence is to find out whether the strategies are different from those adopted by other poverty reduction progrmmes that have failed to impact meaningfully on the poverty levels of participants in the study area. The implementation strategies adopted by *Fadama III* Prgramme are presented in Figure 1.
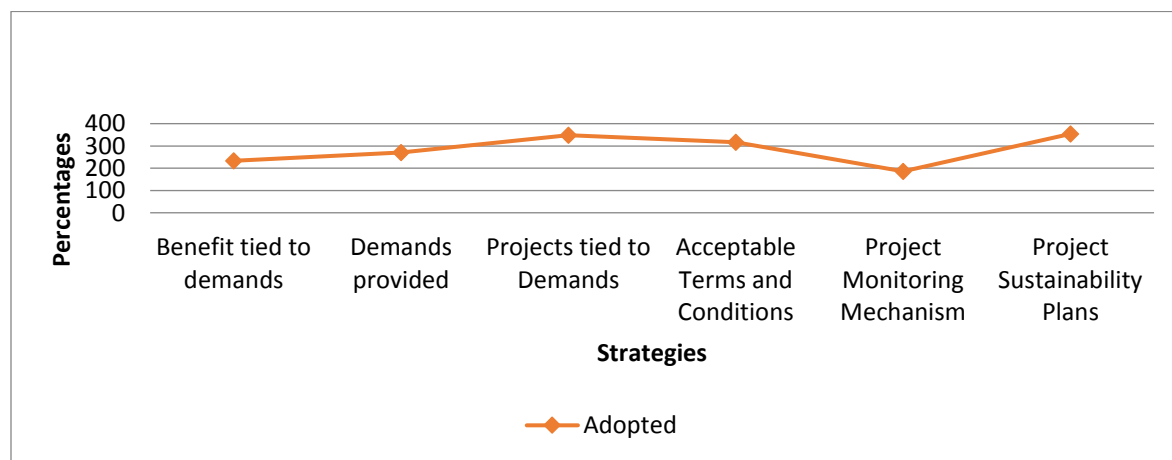


**Figure 1. Bar-chart showing Implementation Strategies adopted by *Fadama III* Programme.**

The output of Figure 1 shows that the unique strategies adopted by *Fadama III* include adopting Community-Driven Development (CDD) or the top bottom approach by providing benefits and projects based on the needs of the communities and individual demands of the beneficiaries, the acceptable terms and conditions as well as the project sustainability plans adopted. However, there was a slack in the project

monitoring mechanism of projects by the programme. This suggests that the project monitoring mechanism of *Fadama III* needs to be strengthened.

**The Role of *Fadama III* Development Programme Components in Poverty Reduction in Benue State.**

This focuses on the role of *Fadama III* Development Programme componenets in poverty reduction in Benue State. The aim is to identify components of the programme that have been successful in its poverty reduction efforts in Benue State as outlined in objective two.

**Table 1. Comparative Impact of *Fadama III* Components of Participants**

| Impact Analysis of Components | Capacity Building | Community Owned Infrastructure | Advisory Services and Input Support | Asset Acquisition |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Livestock and crop management training | 140 | - | - | - |
| Borehole dug | - | 8 | - | - |
| Culverts | - | 26 | - | - |
| Feeder Roads | - | 14 | - | - |
| Herbicide | - | - | 43 | - |
| Fertilizer | - | - | 49 | - |
| Animal feeds | - | - | 6 | - |
| Irrigation pumps | - | - | - | 8 |
| Drinking troughs | - | - | - | NIL |
| Harvester | - | - | - | NIL |
| **TOTAL** | **140** | **48** | **98** | **8** |

**Source:** *Field Survey, 2023*

Table 1 shows that 140 respondents benefitted from Capacity Building, particularly in the area of livestock and crop management training, 48 of them benefitted in Community-owned Infrastructure, such as borehole, culverts and feeder roads, 98 of the respondents benefited in Advisory Services and Input Support such as herbicides, fertilizer and animal feeds, while 8 respondents benefitted in Asset Acquisition particularly by acquiring some irrigation pumps. This implies that the most impacting component of *Fadama III* programme in Nigeria was capacity building. However, Advisory Services and Input Support also did well as a component. The impact of Community-owned Infrastructure was average while the performance of Asset Acquisition component in Benue State was abysmal.

**Problems Militating against the Success of *Fadama III* Programme in Benue State**

**Table 2. Challenges of *Fadama III* in Benue State**

| Challenges of *Fadama III* Programme | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Counterpart Fund delayed by State Government | 334 | 92.3 |
| Counterpart Fund delayed by Local Government | 21 | 5.8 |
| Inability to pay counterpart Fund by FUGs | 155 | 42.8 |
| Untimely disbursement of funds to beneficiaries | 127 | 35.1 |
| Conflict among members of user groups | 286 | 79.0 |
| Non-participation of members in policy discussion | 301 | 83.1 |
| Inadequate training of beneficiaries | 54 | 14.9 |

**Source:** *Field Survey, 2022, Multiple Responses.*

Data presented in Table 2 identified the main challenges militating against the success of *Fadama III* programme in Benue State. The table reveals that the three top challenges of the programme are delay in payment of counterpart funds by Benue State Government (92.3%), non participation of members in policy discussions (83.1%), and conflicts among members of user groups (79.0%). Furthermore, focus group discussions with respondents revealed other key challenges including lack of transparency and corrupt practices by the programme's facilitators, lack of transparency from the traditional rulers involved in the selection of beneficiaries, corrupt practices by the *Fadama* Associations (FCAs) officials, high in prices of input from the *Fadama* office, late supply of farm inputs by *Fadama*, inadequate supervision of programme facilitators and lack of harmonious relationship between the *Fadama* Unions and *Fadama* Project Coordinator (FPC) at the Local Government level.

**Answering the Research Questions**

**How do the implementation strategies of *Fadama III* programme affect the performance of its components in Benue State?**

*Fadama III* adopted a unique approach in engaging with individual participants and the communities. The successful strategies adopted by the programme in Benue State were the Community-Driven Development (CDD) or Bottom-Top approach, as well as the soft terms and conditions. However, the set back in the *Fadama* strategies is the weak project monitoring mechanism that has encouraged high level of official corruption in the execution of *Fadama* projects in the study area.

The most impacting component of *Fadama III* programme in Benue State is capacity building. However, Advisory Services and Input Support also performed well as a component. The impact of Community-owned Infrastructure was average while the performance of Asset Acquisition component in Benue State was abysmal. This result was confirmed by the Oju and Ogbadibo FCA Chairmen who stressed independently, that capacity building and advisory services set farmers on adoptive innovation, insisting that the input support component needs to be reviewed as group allocation was not enough to impact much on participants. This study finding agrees partially with that of Iotyom et al. (2018) which found that *Fadama III* project achieved 95.0 % implementation in Advisory Services while Input Support component had 50% implementation.

**What are the problems militating against the success of *Fadama III* programme in Benue State?**

The three top challenges of the programme are delay in payment of counterpart funds by Benue State Government, non participation of members in policy discussions and conflicts among members of

user groups.  Others include lack of transparency and corrupt practices by the programme's facilitators, lack of transparency from the traditional rulers involved in the selection of beneficiaries, corrupt practices by the *Fadama* Associations (FCAs) officials and hike in prices of input from the *Fadama* office.

## Discussion of Findings

The present study found that *Fadama III* adopted a unique approach in engaging with individual participants and the communities. The successful strategies adopted by the programme in Benue State were the Community-Driven Development (CDD) or Bottom-Top approach, as well as the soft terms and conditions. However, the set back in the *Fadama* strategies is the weak project monitoring mechanism that has encouraged high level of official corruption in the execution of *Fadama* projects in the study area. This revelation was supported by results of the interview. Evidences provided by Oju FCA chairman indicate that the implementation of *Fadama III* programme in the area followed a value-chain-connecting-by-function, to allow for equal participation of members. This finding is consistent with that of Iotyom et al. (2018) who in their assessment of implementation of the World Bank assisted *Fadama III* Project in Benue State: a case study of Makurdi Local Government Area found out that *Fadama III* project has a significant structure that gives voice to the communities and connects them to the government as it created employment opportunities and reduced poverty using bottom-top approach.

The present study also found that the most impacting component of *Fadama III* programme in Benue State is capacity building. However, Advisory Services and Input Support also performed well as a component. The impact of Community-owned Infrastructure was average while the performance of Asset Acquisition component in Benue State was abysmal. This result was confirmed by the Oju and Ogbadibo FCA Chairmen who stressed independently, that capacity building and advisory services set farmers on adoptive innovation, insisting that the input support component needs to be reviewed as group allocation was not enough to impact much on participants. This study finding agrees partially with that of Iotyom et al. (2018) which found that *Fadama III* project achieved 95.0 % implementation in Advisory Services while Input Support component had 50% implementation.

The study found that the three top challenges of the programme are delay in payment of counterpart funds by Benue State Government, non participation of members in policy discussions and conflicts among members of user groups.  Others include lack of transparency and corrupt practices by the programme's facilitators, lack of transparency from the traditional rulers involved in the selection of beneficiaries, corrupt practices by the *Fadama*   Associations (FCAs) officials and hike in prices of input from the *Fadama* office, Officials of the FCAs and FUGs members while in group discussions, indicated that while the sum of N1.8 million and N600, 000 were given to FCAs and GUGs, respectively in other States in Nigeria, the total sum were N1.3 million and N85, 000 respectively in Benue State. This was attributed to corrupt practices by programme handlers in the State.

The challenges also include late supply of farm inputs by *Fadama*, inadequate supervision of programme facilitators and lack of harmonious relationship between the *Fadama* Unions and *Fadama* Project Coordinator (FPC) at the Local Government level. This finding is in congruence with that of Achiv (2014) whose evaluation the Third National *Fadama* Development Programme (*Fadama III*) and poverty reduction in rural communities of Buruku Local Government Area of Benue State identified corrupt practices such as embezzlements and mismanagement of funds by both rural and State management officials of *Fadama III* programme, untimely and inadequate supply of inputs and difficulty of member communities to pay counterpart funds as major constraints to the effective implementation of the programme. Study findings also agree with those of Achoga's (2014) Gender-Based Evaluation of World Bank Assisted *Fadama III* Farm Input Distribution Programme among User Groups in Benue State identified conflict among the user group members and inadequate fund as main challenges.

## Conclusion

The study assessed poverty level of Fadama III participants in Benue State. Specifically, the study evaluated the general level of poverty before and after the implementation of Fadama III programme in Benue State, examined the implementation strategies adopted by Fadama III Development Programme in contrast to other poverty reduction programmes implemented in Benue State, investigate the role of Fadama III Deveiiopmnt Programme components in poverty reduction in Benue State. Results of the study revealed that *Fadama III* employed a unique approach in engaging with participants individually and the host communities. The successful strategies adopted by the programme in Benue State were the Community-Driven Development (CDD) or Bottom-Top approach, as well as the soft terms and conditions. Findings also showed that capacity building is the most profound impact of the *Fadama III* programme in Benue State. Furthermore, the top three challenges that bewildered the Fadama III programme in Benue State include delay in payment of counterpart funds by Benue State Government, non participation of members in policy discussions and conflicts among members of user groups.  Based on these results, the study recommends the following;

1. *Fadama* Development Programme should uphold its Capacity Building, Advisory Services and Input Support components. The input support component however, needs to be reviewed to focus on individual allocation rather than group allocation as contained in the *Fadama III* Additional Financing.  Further review focusing group and individual projects whereby, some larger businesses are funded as group projects to attract support from other sponsors and at the same time, achieve individual empowerment, will give better result.
2. Benue State Government should ensure that counterpart funds are released on time to help farmers produce on time and achieve high productivity. Local Government Areas and FCAs should also endeavour to pay up their counterpart funds to facilitate early release of funds to them. *Fadama III* and other poverty reduction programmes implemented in Benue State such as Benue Care programme should invest more on livestock and crop production ventures like chicken, catfish, rice and cassava. Participants have performed better in these ventures and mechanism by instituting a continuous reporting-supervisory system from the conception, execution and maintenance stages of projects.

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