ALLEVIATING POVERTY THROUGH COMMUNITY ACTION SINCE 1999:
A CASE STUDY OF ORSU L.G.A IMO STATE

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EXTERNAL EXAMINER
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Almighty God who made it possible for me to accomplish this difficult task.

“TO HIM BE ALL THE GLORY”
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title Page</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval Page</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Background to the Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Objectives of the Study</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Significance of the Study</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Scope of the Study</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Literature Review</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 Hypothesis</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9 Methodology</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10 Operational Definitions</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER TWO: THE POVERTY PROBLEM IN ORSU: IT'S NATURE AND CHARACTER BEFORE AND AFTER 1999</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Origin</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Forms and Types</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Consequences</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER THREE: COMMUNITY-ACTION AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN THE ORSU L.G.A SINCE 1999</strong></td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER FOUR: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Summary</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Conclusion</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Recommendations</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BIBLIOGRAPHY</strong></td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>APPENDIX</strong></td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure I: Map of Orsu Local Government Area of Imo State

Figure II: Administrative Structure of Orsu Local Government Area
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Sample Size Distribution of the Orsu Local Government Area  

Table 2: Distribution of Sex  

Table 3: Distribution of Marital Status  

Table 4: Distribution of Educational Qualification  

Table 5: Distribution on Occupation  

Table 6: Percentage Distribution on the Responses  

Table 7: Percentage Distribution on Responses  

Table 8: Percentage Distribution on the Responses  

Table 9: Percentage Distribution on the Responses  

Table 10: Percentage Distribution on the Responses  

Table 11: Percentage Distribution on the Responses  

Table 12: Percentage Distribution on the Responses whether Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Orsu are being Affected by Corruption among Community Leaders  

Table 13: Percentage Distribution on the Responses whether poverty Alleviation Programmes in Orsu are being Affected by Mismanagement and division of the available funds by the Community Leaders  

Table 14: Percentage Distribution of Rank on successful of Poverty Alleviation Programmes.  

Table 15: Distribution on whether poor funding impacts negatively on the poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities.  

Table 16: Distribution on the whether Corruption and Mismanagement of Available funds impacts negatively on the Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Orsu Communities
This study takes a critical examination and evaluation of the poverty alleviation programme through community-action in Orsu Local Government Area of Imo State. Utilizing system theory as our explanatory guide, the study contends that poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities have failed to impact positively on the lives of Orsu dwellers owing significantly to such inherent systemic problems in Nigeria like poor funding of projects, corruption and mismanagement of the available resources among numerous others. As such Orsu dwellers have continued to wallow in abject poverty with its attendant problems such as high rate of child and maternal mortality, prostitution, malnutrition and high rate of rural-urban migration among numerous others. Arising from the above therefore the study recommends for democratization of the choice for community leaders who are vast in experience and knowledgeable enough to determine appropriate poverty alleviation programmes to be conceived and where to locate them. It is equally the recommendation of this study that different levels of government especially Orsu Local Government Council and Imo State Government should not only endeavour to finance communal conceived poverty alleviation projects but also allow for greater indigenous participation in their sponsored poverty alleviation projects. Finally, this study recommends for the poverty alleviation project monitoring committee to be set-up by Imo State government in synergy with Orsu Local Government Council that would ensure efficient management of the available resources in the execution of government and communal poverty alleviation projects.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The topic of study “Poverty Alleviation Through Community Action” is encompassing. It is a general phenomenon in the world. Furthermore, the vital feature of the most Third World countries today is the yawning gap existing between the urban and rural areas, in terms of provision of basic amenities and infrastructures. This backdrop situation has remarkably remained unabated especially in Africa despite the strategic importance of the rural areas to national development and emancipation. For instance, rural areas in Nigeria are known to have accounted for about 80 percent of foreign exchange earnings and 70 percent of government revenues (UNNDP, 2008). But, it is sad to note that rural areas in Nigeria have been bedevilled with an untold hardship, endemic poverty and protracted squalor, and its consequent side effects on national planning and development.

Successive Nigerian governments (colonial, indigenous civilian and military) had indeed, initiated a number of rural based development programmes designed to enhance or improve the living standard of the grassroots and to stem the tide of rural poverty (Mchombu, 1992). Surprisingly, however, the current poverty level and poor state of rural development in Nigeria reflects cumulative default in policy formulation, planning and implementation right from the colonial period (Chigbo, 1999). The colonial ten year plan of Development and Welfare for Nigeria (1946-1959) had indeed represented the first attempt at National development planning and poverty alleviation. Thus, a significant proportion of the country’s wealth during the plan period was devoted to the development and in improvement of social infrastructures in both the urban and rural areas. The plan among other issues recognized the need for physical development of the country. Country and town planning according to the plan documents were not intended to cover merely the expansion and designing of big towns,
but will extend to all parts of the rural areas of Nigeria (Little, 1987). But suffice the foregoing, national and rural development effort to assert that the British Colonial government had no systematic programme for rural development and poverty alleviation. Thus, its overall development and poverty alleviation policy was the extraction of surplus from the rural areas to meet imperial priorities. Infrastructural development in rural areas was therefore, dictated by the need to penetrate export crop producing areas and evacuate produce from the hinterland to the coastal parts. Rural development in this period was only incidental and therefore, not integrated (Uyang, 1993).

With the transition to independence, that is self-government, more conscious steps, measures are efforts were taken to promote rural development and poverty reduction. Thus, regional governments then became the primary agents of rural development attempting not only to strengthen and diversifying the base of economy but also to improve on social welfare and service delivery. However, national development was financed mostly through the proceeds from the farmers. By the end of the first republic, the urban based mode of development had indeed, effectively marginalized and impoverished the rural areas (Ebot, 1988).

The immediate post civil war development programmes of the Gowon’s military regime or administration were essentially focused on integrating various peoples of Nigeria and fostering the spirit of oneness among them through the reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction (RRR) programmes. Thus, little effort was made at refurbishing the decayed socio-economic and political infrastructures, especially in the rural areas and to initiate good polices that could set the country at the path of development. Perhaps, the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) of Obasanjo’s military regime that was principally focused on providing food on every table of Nigerians, was indeed a noticeable effort at poverty reduction in Nigerian. The same was the case with “Green Revolution” (GR) of Shagari’s administration. These
programmes sought to achieve general mobilization of the broad farming population through specific strategies and public slogans. However, they failed to achieve permanent take-off of agricultural development. However, they eventually had little impart on rural development and poverty alleviation (Uyanga, 1993).

The ever increasing poverty level in Nigeria, especially in the rural areas led the Buhari/Idiagbon military regime to introduce the popular “Go back to Land” programmes with many variations, such as the former River’s state governor, Fidelis Oyahilome’s “School of Land” programme and his Lagos State counterpart, Gbolaham Mudashiri’s “Graduate Farming Schools”. Initially the Oyahilome’s scheme worked wonders in Rivers State, made news headline in some national newspapers but, like everything in Nigeria, it fizzled out and died (Maduagwum, 2009). There is a believe that the major versions for the failure of all these agricultural/poverty reduction programmes was that they were based on faulty philosophy.

Thus, in 1986, General Ibrahim Babangida made a conscious policy effort towards poverty alleviation with the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). The period proceeded with severe economic crisis that worsened the quality of life in Nigeria. The military government through the assistance of the World Bank/IMF introduced SAP to checkmate the crisis. However, the implementation of the programmes further worsened the living standard of many Nigerians, especially the poor people (Ugo, 2009). In quick reaction to tackle the crisis, the government designed and implemented many poverty alleviation programmes between 1986 and 1993 under the guided deregulation of the economy. The impact of those programmes on poverty alleviation recorded degree of success. For instance, the establishment of the Directorate for Food, Road and Rural infrastructures (DFRRI) was not only a departure from the previous programmes, but complementary associated with basic needs of life, such as food, shelter, portable water, road construction, transportation, etc. The
programme indeed, gulped about 1.96 billion naira (about 80 billion naira today’s value, but
could not achieve many of its objectives. In fact, it was over ambitions in scope, steeped in
corruption, lack of standards for project harmonization and ineffective mechanisms for
coordination among the three tiers of government (CBN Enugu Zone, 1998).

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) that was later established on October
19, 1986, by the same regime, (that is Babangida’s regime), was meant to combat mass
unemployment, articulated policy aimed at promoting skill acquisition, self employment and
labour intensive potentials. Its programmes was meant not only on unemployment, but also
engaged with designing employment programmes in the country. No doubt, NDE had trained
more than two millions unemployed and provided business training centres for not less than
four hundred thousand Nigerians (Oyemoni, 2003). Sadly, the directorate had suffered a lot
of set backs, such as poor funding, nepotism and official corruption. As such could not cope
with the needs of job applications in Nigeria. This backdrop situation had led to the
establishment of Peoples’ Back of Nigeria (PBN) in 1990 to encourage savings and provide
facilities for the rural poor who could not ordinarily have access to loans from the orthodox
and conventional banking system in Nigeria. In the same vein, Community Bank (CB) was
set up to provide banking facilities for the people of the rural areas and to support micro
enterprise in urban areas. The two banking schemes had indeed, recorded a measurable
success in poverty alleviation. For instance, PBN disbursed up to 1.7 billion naira as an in
house loan from funds derived from the federal government and 9 billion naira as loans from
funds provided by the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP). However, both
the banking schemes had a high degree of problems. Their external audit report showed that
some funds were trapped in distressed and liquidated banks (Oyomon, 2003).

Furthermore, the Family Support Programme (FSP) that was established aimed
primary at poverty alleviation through the provision of health-care delivery, child welfare,
youth development and improved nutritional status to families in rural areas. In a similar objective, the Family Economic Advancement programme (FEAP) was set up to provide credit facilities for agricultural production and processing and small scale industries through, cooperative societies in rural and urban areas. These programmes were further designed to create employment opportunities at ward levels, encourage the design and manufacture plants, machineries and equipments as well as provide opportunities for the training of village based business operators. Although, both FSP and FEAP were designed to improve the quality of life of the rural dwellers, they were again, bedevilled by several malpractices including the non-supervision and monitoring of loans and projects by the participating banks. Also fabricators in connivance with the beneficiaries inflate cost of equipments and provision of substandard equipments as well as poor loan recovery (Ugo and Okpere, 2009).

Indeed, the ravaging poverty situation in Nigeria especially among the rural dwellers and continuous search for alternative reliable and sustainable policy framework for alleviating it had informed the noticeable resolve of the Babangida’s military regime to establish yet what was known as the National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) in 1993. NALDA was established to provide strategic public support for land development, promote and support optimum utilization of rural land resources and encourage the evolution of economic size of rural settlement (Ukpere and Ugo, 2009). Other programmes connected to this are, the Agricultural Development Programmes (ADP), and the Strategic Gains Reserves Programme (SGRP) which had in one way or the other improved positive in the agricultural sector and by implication reduce poverty. These programmes were able to acquire suitable land in various parts of Nigeria for the purpose of development. They parcelled out land into economic size farm plots and distinguished/distributed them to farmers and advised them on all aspects of land conservation and land degradation control. As expected and equally with the case of other
preceding poverty alleviation programmes, they were faced with some problems which included taking more than their statutes allowed that eventually over-burdened them and rendered them ineffective. Indeed they were made to spend more than their incomes. Again, oil mineral producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) was established and set up by the Babangida’s administration in response to series of agitations by the indigenes of the oil producing areas who complained degradation on their farmland through massive oil exploration and drilling. Thus, OMPADEC was created by the Decree No 23 of 1992 with the following objectives.

a) i. to receive and administer the monthly sums from the allocations with confirmed ratio of oil production of each states;

ii. the tackling of ecological problems that have arisen from the exploration and exploitation of oil minerals;

iii. the rehabilitation and development of the oil producing areas;

b) to determine and identify through the commission and the respective oil producing states, the actual oil producing areas, and embark on the development of projects property agreed on with the local communities of oil producing areas.

c) to consult with the relevant federal and state government authorities on the central effective methods of tackling the problems of oil pollution control;

d) to liaise with the various oil companies on matters on pollution control;

e) to obtain from the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), the proper formula for actual oil production of each state, local. Government areas, and communities and to ensure the fair and equitable distribution of projects, services and employment of personnel in accordance with reorganized percentage production, (OMPADE Quarterly Report, 1993).
There were high hopes at its inception that OMPADEC would become the deriving force behind the regeneration of the Niger Delta. The huge financial resources that were ostensibly available to the commission bolstered the good will. Based on 3 percent commitment, it was expected that the commission would be receiving about one billion naira every month from the federation account. This, however, could not materialize due to inter-ministerial intrigues and diverse political calculations in government (Ibeanu, 2008). Thus, according to Horsefall A.K; who chaired the inaugural board of the commission from its inception and dissolution in January 1996: Governments, civil or military never stopped eyeing on funds with a view to either poaching or indirectly controlling or sharing in them. Horsefall argues further:

Between 1993 and 1996 alone, OMPADEC received a substantial amount of money that was enough to develop Niger Delta, but could not achieve much because of political calculations among the ruling class (Horsefall, quoted Ibeanu 2008:30).

Consequently upon the backdrop performances of the OMPADE, Ibeanu (2008) argues:

“…OMPDEC became in the popular consciousness of the people of Niger Delta, another rise designed to enrich the families and friends of the military government while pretending to be investing in the Niger Delta”.

As a Corollary, Ibaba (2001) observes:

‘With the creation of OMPADEC, it was expected that the Niger Delta Communities would experience changes that tend towards liquidation of underdevelopment. To the contrary however, it failed to make any significant impact on measures of development”

Commenting further, he attributed the failure of OMPADEC to a number of factors like profligacy, corruption, misplaced projects and fault in the implementation strategy.

Thus, while the failure of OMPADEC may largely be attributed to several factors, scholars have argued that the structure of any establishment is inextricable tied to its functions. OMPADEC was indeed structured to safeguard the interest of the dominant ethnic
groups who control the political power and productive force in Nigeria. It was therefore created to develop the area whose people do not control the state. Thus, the dominant ethnic groups who control the states stifle the commission in the manner of imposition of incompetent contractors and refusal to provide the commission with its funds (Ibeanu, 2008). As such the problems which OMPADEC was set out to solve remained unabated. This situation resulted in the renewed agitation for more committed development agenda for the Niger Delta region.

In pursuance of poverty alleviation, the military regime of Late Sani Abacha indeed, made a noticeable effort at rural transformation and poverty alleviation among Nigerians by constituting two agencies, namely Petroleum Trust Fund, (PTF) and Better Life for rural Women Programme (BLP). The BLP was rural based programme, with the overall objective of improving and sustaining high quality of life of the family, including the husband, wife, children, the aged and disabled. (Amaechi, 1995:3-4). In addition, it was also created to facilitate increase social and economic activities of individual families so that such interaction will lead to increased positive interpersonal reflections and family cohesion. It pursued its rural family development efforts through eight channels-educations, agriculture, women in development, income generation, rehabilitation of destitute and the disabled, child welfare and youth development and provision of shelter. (Abacha, 1994). According to the PTF Decree 25 of 1994 (as amended), the fund was to finance the execution of projects in several areas. These were railway transportation and waterways, education, health, good and water supply, security services and alternative sources of domestic energy. Perhaps, the comprehensive nature of the programme was purposely designed so as to accelerate the overall national interest including rural development and poverty alleviation.

The inception of democratic rule in 1999 witnessed a giant land mark in poverty alleviation and overall national development. Thus, Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP)
was established in 2000 by Obasanjo’s civilian administration to urgently create jobs for the unemployed in the face of increasing youth restiveness. These projects were to stimulate economic activities and improve the environment. The participants engaged in direct labour activities, such as patching of potholes, vegetation control along highways, maintenance of public buildings and environmental sanitation (Oyemoni, 2003). The implementation of PAP generated public outcry and was accused of shoddiness and corruption. Subsequently, the government had set up a panel committee headed by Prof Ango Abdullahi to review the programme. The problems identified with the programme included over centralization, over politicization, irregular payment, uncoordinated management as well as high corruption (Oyemoni, 2003). The committee therefore came up with the blueprint recommending National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP).

NAPEP was established in 2001 and involved all stakeholders in poverty eradication in Nigeria, namely, the federal state, and local governments, civil society organizations, research institutions, organised private sectors, women groups and concerned individuals (Okoye and Onyukwu, 2007). NAPEP aimed at addressing the aspects of absolute poverty and to eradicate them. The stakeholders recognized that certain fundamental reasons were responsible for the inadequacy of anti-poverty measures over the years and they include the absence of a policy framework, inadequate involvement of stakeholders, poor management and implementation arrangements and lack of proper coordination. All these seem to have received attention in designing NAPEP and to make it different from all past efforts. The mandate is to monitor and coordinate all poverty eradication efforts in order to harmonize and ensure better delivery, maximum impact and effective utilization of available resources. In order to ensure effective poverty eradication, the government arranged NAPEP into four schemes. These are:
a) Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES). This deals with capacity acquisition, mandatory attachment, productivity improvement, credit delivery, technology development and enterprise promotion.

b) Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS), this has to do with the provision of portable and irrigation water, transport (rural and urban), rural energy and power supply.

c) Social Welfare Services Scheme (SOWESS) this deals with intervention in special education, primary health-care services, establishment and maintenance of recreational centres, public awareness facilities, youth and student hostels, development, environmental protection facilities, food security, provision of agricultural input, provision of micro and macro credits delivery, rural telecommunication facilities, provision of mass transit and maintenance culture.

d) National Resources Development and Conservation Scheme, (NRDCS) deals with the harnessing of agriculture, water, solid minerals resources, conservation of land and space particularly for the convenient and effective utilization by small scale operators and the immediate community (Okafor and Onyukwu 2007).

Apart from the above, NAPEP also has an organisational structure. At the top of the scheme is the National Poverty Eradication Council (NAPEC). It coordinates all poverty reduction related activities and also ensures that the activities involved are centrally planned and coordinated in ways that make them complement one another. In terms of institutional structure, NAPEP data and information flow upwards from the local government level to the state coordinating committees and up to national coordination committee. In essence, information flow is from the bottom-up, with each subsequent level reviewing, refining and standardizing data as well as completing assessment reports. NAPED performs two major functions. It plays the role of monitoring and that of evaluation. In terms of monitoring, it
monitors all the relevant initiatives, periodically to confirm project location project implementation, project delivery, functionality of facilities provided, assess impacts on livelihood of communities, ensure equitable distribution and review the actual poverty status or situation of the communities in Nigeria. Indices of monitoring are evaluated from broad performance blocks such as quality, project objective and target achievement, scheduled completion and financial prudence (Okoye and Onyeukwu, 2007).

Despite the activities of NAPEP, there are yet in existence several poverty alleviation and national development programmes, both at the national, state and local government levels. The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) that was later launched as a follow-up to NAPEP which focused on poverty reducing through public sector reforms, privatization, liberalization, governance, transparency and anticorruption, service delivery, budget Expenditure reforms. Besides, it was equally aimed at provision of health facilities, education, environmental transformation, housing development, safety nets, gender and geo-political balance and pension reforms. The United Nations (UN) has equally its rural assisted development programmes scattered all over the country. In addition, most states of the federation have Directorate For Rural Development and other rural based project such as River State School-To-Land programme, Integrated Rural Development of Bauchi State the Imo Initiative of Imo State and Taraba State Human Development Policy (Okitikpi, 1996).

The shift of focus to poverty alleviation through community- action especially the Orsu Local Government case has indeed become an acceptable reality and norm in the contemporary Nigeria State. This is because of the inability of the past Nigerian governments’ to provide policies on poverty alleviation to impact positively on the lives of Nigerians especially for the rural populace. Most communities and towns in various states of the federation have now realised the need for self help efforts geared towards poverty
alleviation community development though the paths have not been very easy and smooth as a result of some militating factors.

This study is therefore, principally focuses on assessing the impact of poverty alleviation through community action using Orsu Local Government Area of Imo State of Nigeria as a case study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Poverty is the state of being deprived of those opportunities and choices that are essential to human development for a long health, creative life for a reasonable standard of living, for freedom, dignity, self-respect and respect from others (UNDP, 1999:3). Likewise, World Bank Report (2000:1) sees poverty as “a shortfall of a certain income threshold and a certain amount of expenditure for consumption”. Thus, poverty is generally perceived as the inability of an individual of a society to acquire basic needs for existence such as food, shelter and clothing.

It is not surprising however, that most African countries account for about 80 percent of World poverty (UNDP, 1999) resulting from repressive regimes, official corruption and mismanagement of the naturally endowed resources such as petroleum, gas, gold, diamond, tin, copper, zinc, timber iron, cocoa, coal etc. For instance, the prolonged and intractable armed conflict in Sudan had resulted from the long perceived impoverishment, injustice and deprivation of the country southern hemisphere by the Northern controlled government. Besides, the oil and gas resources that could have seen Sudanese out of poverty, squalor, and socio-economic and institutional decay rather had led to ruthless ethnic cleansing (especially in Darfur region) that has left about 1.5 billion people homeless, 50,000 dead and 200,00 in refugees camps in neighbouring Chad Republic (Nwagu, 2008). To this end, Seddon and Zeilig (2005) had argued that, ‘‘to say that the Sudanese National government has not broken the implicit social contract to safeguard not only the material wellbeing of the people but also
their political right is indeed, to say the least’. More still, successive regimes in Khartoum have found themselves seriously challenged by other ethnic groups, particularly when the groups perceived that discriminatory economic system and policies have been introduced and such introduction creates economic and social disparities along cultural, ethnic and religious lives to the extent that such obnoxious policies have adversely affected their individual and collective lives as a people (Nwagu, 2008). The case was the same with the Republic of South Africa before the advent of black majority leadership, when the majority black populace were subjected to untold poverty and hardship as a result of Apartheid Policy.

Nigeria, as a state, that gained political independence from the colonial tutelage of Britain had indeed, been hunted by protracted endemic poverty situation that has seemed to have resisted all forms of policy solutions. This poverty scenario in Nigeria is more noticeable especially in rural areas where the rural dwellers are grossly marginalized and starved of the basic necessities of life such as employment opportunities, good road network, pipe born water, communication facilities, except few communities, or towns that have been privilege enough to have produced leadership at the different governmental levels. Thus, Nigeria, it is noted, has become a contradiction, contradiction in the sense that it is a land rich in natural and human resources but endemic poverty is taking its toll on the generality of the populace, and this has affected their sense of justice and moral discrimination. (Ikejiani-Clark and Eze, 2008). According to annual report of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, (NEEDS) in 2005, the poverty level in Nigeria increased from 27 percent in 1980 to 66 percent in 1996. Furthermore, by 1999, it was estimated that more than 70% percent of Nigerians were living in poverty (NEEDS, 2000). Life expectancy was mere 54 years and mortality rate 77 per 1000 people and maternal mortality, 704 per 100,000 live births. NEEDS report equally outline other indicators of poverty rate in Nigeria to include;

i. only about 10 percent of the population had access to essential drugs,
ii. there were fewer than 30 physicians per 100,000 people,

iii. more than 5 million adults were estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS,

iv. among children under five years, almost 30 percent were under weight;

v. only 17 percent of children were fully immunized.

vi. only about half the Nigerian populace had access to safe drinking water, 40 percent in rural areas, 80 percent in urban areas;

vii. some 29 percent of the total population live at risk from annual floods,

viii. more than 90 percent living at the rural areas depended on forests for livelihood and domestic energy resources,

ix. rural households spent an average of 1.5 hours a day collecting/fetching water and fuel/firewood, with household members trekking an average of one kilometre a day for these purpose. NEEDS (2000)

The increased poverty level in Nigeria today, especially among the rural populace does not however suggest that affirmative policies efforts have not been made by the successive Nigerian governments since political independence to alleviate it. Suffice this to state that these efforts (both past and present) have not impacted positively on the lives of the rural poor resulting from various militating factors. Thus, UNDP (2006:10) reports state that:

Development in the recent times has been tailored to reflect the targeted populace. As such, the rural development and poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria have not targeted the populace, and thus the rural dwellers have been starved of such base line development programmes such as unrestricted access to land and water resources, agricultural inputs and services, including extension and research facilities, and participatory development strategies to tackle rural poverty, with social equity and civil participation viewed as essential to well-rounded socio-economic development.

Specifically, the “Ten Year Plan of Development and Welfare for Nigeria” (1946-1959), represents the first attempt at national development planning. A significant proportion of the
country’s wealth during the plan period was devoted to the development and improvement of social infrastructures in both urban and the rural areas (Little, 1987). The plan recognized the need for physical development and planning of the country. Town and country planning, according to the plan document was not intended to cover merely the expansion and designing of big towns, but will extend to all parts of the rural areas of Nigeria (Little 1987). These included agricultural programmes like National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), and the Green Revolution (GR). These programmes sought to achieve general mobilizations of the broad farming population through specific strategies and publicity slogans. They eventually had little input on global rural development and poverty alleviation (Uyanga, 1963).

With the transition to independence, more conscious steps, measures and efforts were taken, to promote rural development and poverty alleviation. Regional governments became the principal agents of rural development, attempting not only to strengthen and diversify the base of the economy, but also to improve social welfare and service delivery. However, national development and poverty alleviation were financed mostly through the proceeds from the farmers. By end of the first Republic, this urban based mode of development had effectively marginalised and impoverished the rural areas. (Obolt, 1988). Similar commitments to rural development efforts were retreated in the Second, Third, and Fourth Development Plans. Following these plans, the various arms of government planned to enhance the quality of life in the rural areas through the provisions of basic social amenities, and agricultural facilities. The aim was to narrow the disparity between the rural and urban population. For instance, the oil boom in the third plan relieved some of the pressures on rural areas for finance development and allowed the government to increase the volume of large scale investment in agriculture. It was indeed, stated specifically in the Third National Development Plan (1978:30) that:
Every developing nation/country is now conscious of the need for balance development. A situation where some parts of the country are experiencing rapid economic growth while other parts are lagging behind can no longer be tolerated.

The Fourth Plan, which introduced rural development as a plan category, placed more emphasis on raising productivity in agriculture through distribution of high yielding variety seeds with a general Green Revaluation Package. However, there was no systematic concern with improving the quality of life and enhancing the economic capacity of the rural areas generally, (Obolt, 1987). The same was the case with the DFRRI and OMPADEC, which were later established by the Ibrahim Babangida’s military regime. More still, the FSP, PTF, BLP and NAPEP poverty alleviation programmes established by the Abacha military regime and Obasango’s civilian regime respectively, could not impact positively on the average Nigerian populace, especially the rural poor. In addition, the UNDP through its special agencies had its poverty alleviation programmes scattered throughout Nigeria. Igbozuruike (1997:17) had argued that:

Past efforts at Nigerian rural development and poverty alleviation have not given due attention to the gathering of information on the rural areas and presenting the result in form of data, maps, plans or even sketches. Thus, all efforts had been directed at the mobilization of human resources. This situation he contends, has continually affected the results of the present rural development efforts.

Therefore, the ever increasing difficulty and backdrop performances of the government established rural development poverty alleviation programmes had led to diverse versions of communal and tribal disturbances especially in those communities that account for the greater part of the national income and foreign exchange earning. To this end, Ezirim (2008:223) argues that:

Rural poverty has led to different forms of agitations and criminality in the form of kidnapping of oil expatriates for ransom and vandalism of oil pipelines in search for oil to be sold for family subsistence and personal uses, mainly in the oil producing
communities in Nigeria. It has equally led to indigenes and non-indigenes dichotomy and settler problems in Nigeria.

It is not surprising, however, that the shift of focus towards poverty alleviation through community-action especially in Orsu Local Government Area of Imo State has indeed, become a more acceptable phenomenon. As such, there is urgent need to fill the wide existing gap between the rural poor and the urban dwellers and various communities in Nigeria; although some militating factors have been implicated. Orsu Local Government Area is not an exception. Indeed, since the creation of the local government in 1991, the local government had witnessed a great measure of neglect and marginalization, in terms of representation, in both state and federal government levels, funding of the community sponsored poverty alleviation projects and provision of basic amenities, such as pipe bone water, electricity, motor able roads, schools and basic health facilities among others. For instance, in the 2010 Approved Estimate of Orsu Local Government Area in the Summary of Capital Expenditure, the community development projects (including poverty alleviation) were allocated the paltry sum of 5,000,000 Naira, as against other allocations such as General Administration, which stood at 26,000,000 Naira (Orsu Local Government Council Document, 2010). Suffice this to say that because of the location of the local government and the dwellers contribution to the common-wealth of the state and federal government, as the people are mainly peasants and petty traders, Orsu has greatly been neglected by the various levels of government, and this had informed their resolve to embark on self-help programmes aimed at community development and poverty alleviation, though these genuine and intensified efforts have suffered a great set back as a result of human and material problems.

Notwithstanding the meagre financial allocations to the community development projects in the council areas and other observable problems, the problem of this study therefore, stems from the puzzle that despite the available human and material resources to the local government and community leaders, the average Orsu populace have continued to
wallow in abject poverty and squalor. Besides, the basic social amenities and infrastructures have remained largely non-existence and undeveloped. It is our intension in this study to assess the community development programmes in Orsu Local Government Area of Imo State with a view to identifying those militating factors, using the following research questions as our guide:

1. Does poor funding impacts negatively on the poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities?
2. Do corruption and mismanagement of available funds impact negatively on the poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities

1.3 Objectives of the Study

A study of a contemporary issue like alleviating poverty through community action is in no doubt, elicits interest as there is urgent need to locate those militating factors that have crippled efforts to the fact that the questions posed in the problem statement clearly identified the problem, the objectives of this study therefore, are not far-fetched. The broad objective of this study is to assess the poverty alleviation programmes through community action using Orsu Local Government Area of Imo State as our case study.

However, the specific objectives include;

1. To find out whether poor funding has negative impact on the poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu Communities.
2. To find out whether corruption and mismanagement of funds have negatively impact on the poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study has both theoretical and practical Justifications. The theoretical relevance of this study derives from its focus on the poverty alleviation through community - action as a case study. In addition, the study will enrich the existing stock of literature through its
findings and therefore will serve as a source of reference material or data for scholars whose interest would eventually be aroused by this study to undertake further studies in the area.

Practically, this study will be of interest to the Nigerian government and international organisations such as the World Bank, UNDP and oil companies operating in Nigeria. Indeed, it will compel different levels of government in Nigeria to be more practice to issues concerning rural development and poverty alleviation. Government will appreciate the need to step up its agencies that are involved in poverty alleviation programmes especially as it concerns the rural areas and to stop blaming the rural dwellers as contributors to their socio-economic woes.

The findings will equally compel the local government officials and community leaders involved in the management of the funds used in poverty alleviation programmes to appreciate the need for transparency and accountability.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study shall be limited to the assessment of the impact of community development programmes in Orsu Local Government Area since 1999. To this end, Orsu Local Government Area remains the population of study, but through sampling techniques, community which served as our sample size were selected. The sample size constitutes both literate and semi-literate Orsu indigenes.

However, data for these studies is limited to primary sources such as questionnaires and interviews. Moreover, some references were drawn from secondary sources like journal articles, textbooks, commentaries in newspapers and magazines and research studies.

In addition, some limitations have been intensified in this study. First, the study is limited by paucity of fund and time allocation. In no doubt, the quality of scientific research like this study is always the function of the available resources and time allocation. Thus, the
time allocation and non availability of fund actually contribute a very big constraint to this study. Again, bias on the side of the respondents can equally not be over emphasised.

The validity of this study is affected by the respondents’ bias attitude in responding to the questionnaires and interviews.

Finally, this study is limited by a number of unavoidable mistakes resulting from the presentations and tabulations.

We do hope to improve on these shortcomings in future study of this nature.

1.6 Literature Review

The persistent crisis of poverty and its alleviation in Nigeria and Orsu Local Government Area of Imo State in particular, has in no doubt, generated a plethora of Scholarly literature. The perspectives of the literature are as diverse as the dimension that the crisis itself has assumed. Essentially, the review of the extant literature shall be strictly guided by the research questions. This is to say that the views of scholars that will address the research questions posed shall be reviewed. Moreover, other scholarly views that may be considered as providing an insight into this research would equally be reviewed.

Conceptual and Theoretical Issues of Poverty

There is no universally accepted definition of poverty. At the same time, there is always the difficulty in deciding where to draw the line between the poor and the non-poor or rich. Thus, according to the World Bank Report (2002), poverty is the inability to attain a minimum standard of living. The report had constructed some indices based on a minimum level of consumption in order to show the practical aspect of poverty. These include, lack of access to resources, lack of education and skills, poor health, malnutrition, lack of shelter, poor access to water, and sanitation, vulnerability to shocks, violence and crime, political discrimination and marginalization. Similarly, the United Nations Human Development (UNHD) has introduced the use of such other indices such as life expectancy, infant mortality
rate, primary school enrolment ratio and number of persons per physician to measure poverty in a country (UNHD, 2002).

Aluko (1995) refers to poverty as a lack of command over basic consumption needs. There is an inadequate level of consumption such as rise to insufficient food, clothing and shelter. He noted that the conventional motion depicts poverty as a condition in which people are below a specific minimum income level and are unable to provide or satisfy the basic necessities of life needed for an acceptable standard of living. The explanation however failed to provide the specific picture of those who are poor, how to change their conditions and what to do.

According to Shaffer (2001), the concept of poverty has undergone four changes over the past decade. First there has been a shift from a physiological model of deprivation to a social model is about incorporating issues of political and economic rights and social justice into the anti-poverty programmatic framework. Second there has been renewed emphasis placed on the concept of vulnerability and its relationship to poverty. Third, the concept of inequality and its relationship to poverty has re-emerged as a central concern. Fourth, the idea that poverty should be conceptualised as violation of basic human rights has been painstakingly argued by UN system agencies.

Similarly, Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002) believe that meaningful onslaught against poverty must be focused on many fronts, engaging both physical and non-physical challenges. Poverty reduction polices integrate all these dimensions in order to be seen and completed. Efforts and resources needed to attempt to address the physiological needs of citizens alone is prodigious enough not to talk of waging in all-inclusive campaign against poverty which shows that the socio-economic problems that policies address cannot be solved by governments acting on their own nor are they exclusive domain of one sector.
Hettne (2002) maintains that poverty can be classified into five types. First, absolute poverty that occurs when human beings live in a state of deprivation due to meagre income or lack of access to basic human needs which includes, food, safe, water, sanitation, health, shelter education and information. Second, relative poverty defines poverty from a comparative point of view (that is poverty is not absolute but relative). Relative refers to the position of household or individual compared. It is measured in three ways, through the low income family statistics, through income and through disposable income. Third, chronic/structural means that poverty is persistent or long term. Its causes are more permanent and depend on a host of factors, such as limited productive resources, lack of skill for gainful employment, vocational disadvantage or endemic socio-political and cultural factors. Fourth, conjectural transitory which means poverty is temporary or short-terms and cause mainly by factors such as natural or man-made disasters – wars and environmental degradation or structural changes induced by policy reforms which results in loss of employment, loss in value of real income, assets, etc. Fifth, spatial/local means depending on geographical or regional spread and incidence. It involves urban squalor/poverty typifying the existence of ghettos, shims and shanties in metropolitan cities and characterized by environmental degradation, inadequate welfare services and social deprivation, low per capita income over-crowded accommodation, engagement in informal business, rural poverty characterized by poor conditions of living.

Zupi (2007) had argued that poverty should be seen as a dynamic process rather than a static phenomenon, one that captures the various forms of deprivation in well-being. It implies an observable disadvantage in relation to the local community or the wider society or nation to which a deprived individual, family, household or group belongs. The concept of poverty according to him is, also linked to distribution in terms of economic distance that is inequality. However, he argues that distribution alone cannot identify the ability to achieve a
decent level of living. Distribution must be regarded as an important correlated but different concept to poverty. As a general rule, a better distribution will be more pro-poor but opposed the view that poverty and inequality are correlated.

Corroborating poverty as a formal marginalization, Procacci (2007) avers that marginalization puts poverty further apart from the whole of society. Thus, according to him, as far as poverty is concerned, the fundamental right to a minimum of resources for not starving is not enough for organising a social response to its increase. He maintained that social exclusion confirms a dual society and appears more as a symptom of social fractions than as a solution against it. Thus, under the millennium development goals, (MDGs) today’s development strategies try to put under question the reverse link between growth and inequality by tackling poverty under multiple dimension. This inevitably demands that not only extreme poverty is targeted, nor individual trajectories, but rather that multiple process producing within society are also tackled.

Sen (1992) in his theory of poverty implies the idea that poverty is not a natural phenomenon within a large frame of inequality problems; rather it can be eliminated if people are enabling to become autonomous from needs. No real development is possible, according to him, if basic needs are imminent and larger and large strata of the population are kept in a condition of dependency. Rejecting the idea of poverty as a natural, object and its inevitability in human societies, help to orient our questioning towards concrete social practices treating poverty, their transformations and their effects, he states.

As Manning (2007) observed, rapid and sustained poverty reduction requires what he calls pro-poor growth’ that is, a pace and pattern of growth that enhances the ability of poor women and men to participate in contribute to and benefit from growth. In essence, according to him, growth should be broad based across sectors and regions and inclusive of the large part of the workforce that poor men and women make up. Also policies for sustaining
growth, such as those aiming at strengthening institutional capacity, promoting democratic and effective governance should increase poor peoples incentives, opportunities and capabilities for employment so that they can participate in and benefit from growth.

Still on the conceptual and theoretical issues concerning poverty, Nwobi, (2000) perceives poverty as a state of helplessness in man’s daily quest to satisfy his basic needs such as food, shelter, security, clothing and good health. Thus, according to him, the phenomenon of poverty has many dimensions. It does not ordinarily mean lack of skills, ideas, opportunities or even good health, but the state of being poor and lack of resources necessary for living meaningful life.

The UNDP global human development report (2003) is more encompassing as regard conceptual and theoretical issues concerning poverty and its alleviation. Thus, according to the report, more than one billion people globally, one person in five, live in abject poverty. Furthermore, global infrastructural gap is currently huge. The report has it that evidence shows that more than one billion people global have no access to roads, 1.2 billion do not have safe drinking water, 2.3 billion lack reliable energy, 2.4 billion have no sanitation facilities and 4 billion without modern commutation services. In absence of accessible transport, energy and water, the poor pay heavily in turn, money and health. In many developing nations, notably in Sub-Sahara Africa, growth has been low and so provided few benefits for the poor to reap. The report further argues that government of these countries are currently unable to create sufficient formal jobs to absorb the increase in the non-agricultural workforce. As such, hundred of million of poor people earn their livelihood informally. It is estimated that 72 percent of the non-agricultural workforce. As such, hundred of million of poor people earn their livelihoods informally representing one of the most important policy issues for private sector development. The report maintains that in sub-Saharan African counties, infrastructure has suffered from severed cuts in public spending. This trend is
against the popular belief that public spending is required to increase human development. No doubt, for many years, national poverty reduction strategies of these countries typically focused on social development. However, the mechanisms through which poor people would participate in and benefit from the growth process were not emphasised. In fact, agriculture and infrastructure that form the important sectors for expanding the economic activities of the poor were neglected. Thus, according to the report, to realise potential in the agricultural sector, policy needs to address broad set of challenges including infrastructural development, research and development, education and land reform. The report finally argued that without the necessary policy and institutional reforms, targeted support, no matter how well designed implemented and irrespective of whether it aims to promote economic or social development is unlikely to lead to sustained improvements in the livelihood of the poor.

**Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria and the Orsu Local Government**

Drawing largely from the experiences of the Niger Delta people, the UNDP report (1998:3) observes that poverty alleviation and rural development programmes in Nigeria have since ignored human development as the epicentre for poverty alleviation. It further argues that development programmes cum poverty alleviation in recent years have been focused on the over-riding issues of equity and equality in the distribution of the gains from development efforts. This, according to the report, has to do with expressing a lot of concern about the predicaments of the rural poor and the imperatives of several base line requirements for human development. These requirements involve unrestricted access to land and water resources, agricultural inputs and services, including extension and research facilitations, and participatory development strategies to tackle rural poverty with social equity and civil participation viewed as essential to well-rounded socio-economic development.

Conceptually, poverty as that conditions which result from individual misfortunes or inability to obtain the basic necessities of life such as clothing, food, habitable house and
means of transportation either by land, sea or air, Olaitan, et al (2000) states that Nigeria today is classified as a poor country as a result of her inability to provide essential services to the populace especially the rural dwellers. Thus, wide range institutional frameworks designed to tackle poverty in Nigeria since political independence have not served this purpose. As such they argue that prevalence of ethno-religious, tribal and community identity based has become defining and enduring decimal in Nigeria.

To Ngene (2000), poverty alleviation programme in Nigeria would continue to fail until the root cause of poverty is ascertained and addressed. According to him, the cause of poverty in most African countries could be traced to what he termed as “the theory of vicious circle”. He avers that the theory exposed African economies to the ruthless plunder brought by foreign investments. Arguing further, he believes that the stratification of the World into developed, developing and less developed economy is one of the causes of the international struggle for dominance in the global scene. The more the developed economies occupy the leading position in the economic and political spheres in the international scene, the more they weaken the economic base of the less and developing countries. Therefore, delinking from the dominance of developed countries, he suggests is the only way to alleviate poverty in Africa and Nigeria particularly.

As a corollary, Dayo (2000) argued that lack of capital, low level of technology; high population and economic mismanagement constitute factors that cause poverty in Nigeria. For instance, according to him, the population of Nigeria that is estimated at 150 million people entail that the available resources and infrastructure such as pipe borne water electricity, housing, transportation, etc are over stretched. To Dayo, poverty would continue to escalate in Nigeria until such negative factors prevalent in the Nigerian as enumerated above are addressed.
According to Maduagwu (2009), one of the reasons why most poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria failed is “the politics of personal rule”, a distinctive type of political system in which the rivalries and struggles of powerful and wilful men, rather than impersonal institutions, ideologies, public policies or class interests are fundamental in shaping political life. It is a monopolistic politics as against pluralistic or multi-party politics. It is usually a civilian one-party state or a military dictatorship. It is the politics of ‘Big-men’ who are in a considerable distance from the ordinary people. Politics of no accountability, transparency and responsibility. Other practices in personal government are conspiracy factional politics, clientelism and corruption, purges and rehabilitations and secession manoeuvres. Furthermore, Maduagwu argues, that by this type of monopolistic politics, there is little or no time for the governed. When the governed, the ordinary people are eventually remembered, a not-well thought of system is put in place to alleviate their suffering. At the end, he maintains, the beneficiaries of the system (Poverty Alleviation Programmes) are the same big-men that the political system is made up of. Nigerian politics since independence (Perhaps with exception of the Balewa government), to the last military rule have been monopolistic in practice. Hence, the lukewarm attitudes towards the impoverished majority and the badly managed programmes that suppose to alleviate their sufferings, he contends.

Igbozuruike (2000) had argued that past efforts in Nigerian rural development and poverty alleviation have not given due attention to the gathering of information on the rural areas and presenting the result in form of data, maps plans or even sketches. He maintains that no systematic planning either long or short term had emerged because necessary data on land are not available. Similarly, no programme for the acquisition of the data had taken off. All efforts had been directed at the mobilization of human resources. This situation according to him, has continually affected the results of rural development and poverty alleviation efforts in Nigeria. He maintains that absence of adequate information on Nigerian rural
environment has made their true characters unknown before planning the type and nature of the development that should be initiated; projects are started without planning to satisfy the demand of the people. Thus, their expectant results are unfulfilled expectations.

In the same manner, Uyanga (1993) argues that in Nigerian community roads are constructed without proper planning and the construction is often epileptic. The result is that the so-called new rural roads, develop into gully channels and intractable routes during the rains. Water boreholes are sunk without geographical and geological surveys to determine at what depth the boreholes would be able to produce the desired water at all seasons. The result is that scarce resources of the government and the community are wasted on seasonal or all season dry holes. He maintains that rural farm land are indiscriminately cleared for non-existing rural industries and later abandoned to sheet erosion. Similarly, rural electricity lines run through villages without proper design thereby decreasing economic trees. Some of these projects are abandoned half-way because of the community or the governments do not have the necessary resources to finalise them, he contends.

Ugoh and Ukpere (2009), however, traced the origin of poverty alleviation and rural development programmes in Nigeria when they wrote that they predate the country’s political independence. Thus, during colonial period, the colonial administration had seen the need for rural development in Nigeria and drew up programmes and strategies and laid out resources the first two 10 year development plan (1940-1955). The policies were targeted at local processing of raw produce, such as groundnut, palm oil, hides and skin. At independence however, especially between 1962-68, 1970-74, 1975-80 and 1981-85, various governments had designed development programmes aimed at providing basic infrastructure, diversely the economy, reduce the level of unemployment, achieve dynamic self-sustaining growth and raise the living standard of people. These programmes according to them include Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) in 1977, Free and Compulsory Primary Education, (FCPE) in 1977,
Green Revolution (GR) in 1980, etc. The OFN and Green Revolution were established to boost agricultural production and efficiency in the general performance of the agricultural sector. FCDE was set up to reduce mass illiteracy at the grassroots level. They maintain that most of these programmes made some laudable impacts by enhancing the quality of life of many people but were not anti-poverty measure. In essence, government only showed concern for poverty reduction indirectly. They argue however that the programmes could not be sustained because of lack of political will and commitment, policy instability and insufficient involvement of the poor people in these programmes.

In another breath, Obadan (1996) avers that in the light of the governments concern for poverty reduction, numerous policies and programmes have been designed at one time or the other, if not to meet the special needs of the poor at least to reach them in Nigeria. Thus, according to him, the advent of the Structural Adjustment Programme in 1986 brought out more forcefully the need for policies and programmes to alleviate poverty and provide safety nets for the poor. This emphasis arises from an awareness of the unintended negative effects of structural adjustment policies on the vulnerable groups in the society. While structural adjustment had its solution effects on economic growth, it lacked emphasis on development and also accentuated socio-economic problems of income inequality, unequal access to food, shelter, education, health and other necessities of life. It, indeed, aggravated the incidence of poverty among many vulnerable groups in the society. He maintains that as a result of the continuous deterioration of living conditions in the late 1980s, several poverty alleviation programmes came on board. They were designed to impact positively on the poor. By the end of 1978, there were sixteen poorly institutions in the country. In 1994, the government set up a broad based Poverty Alleviation Programme Development Committee (PAPDC) under the aegis of the National Planning Commission. The primary objective of the PAPDC was to advise the government on the design, coordination and implementation of
poverty alleviation programmes. Furthermore, he avers that PAPDC worth contributed immensely to the emergence of a new approach to the design and organization of poverty alleviation programmes culminating in the establishment in 1996 of the Community Action Programme for Poverty Alleviation (CAPPA).

CAPPA according to Obadan was a community-based approach which adopts a combination of social funds and social action strategy. The CAPPA document drew largely from the past experience on poverty reduction efforts in the country and attempts to ensure that the poor are not only carried along in the design and implementation of poverty projects that affect them but that the poor themselves actually formulate and manage the poverty projects. Various agencies (Governments, Donors and NGOs) involved in poverty alleviation in the country had indeed embraced the CAPPA strategy. In conclusion, however, Obadan argues that a number of government programmes initiated in the past that aimed at providing basic services, infrastructure and housing facilities for the rural and urban population, existing access to credit farm inputs, and creating employment were not specifically targeted towards the poor, though they affect them. He maintains that rather the programmes were specific multi-sector programmes (water, sanitation, environment, etc) as well as sector-specific programmes in agriculture, health, education, transport, housing, finance, industries/manufacturing and nutrition. He however, admits that though some achievements were recorded by these programmes in poverty reduction on the areas of food crop production, agriculture and industrial extension services, primary health care, etc a number of factors had led to the failure of these programmes which includes:

i) lack of targeting mechanisms for the poor and the fact that most of the programmes do not focus directly on the poor.

ii) political and policy instability have resulted in frequent policy changes and inconsistent implementation which in turn have presented continuous progress.
iii) inadequate coordination of the various programmes has resulted in each institution carrying out its own activities with resultant duplication of efforts and inefficient use of limited resources. Overlapping functions ultimately led to institutional rivalry and conflicts.

iv) serve budgetary, management and governance problems have afflicted most of the programmes, resulting in facilities not being completed, broken down and abandoned, unsafe and unequipped.

v) lack of accountability and transparency thereby making the programmes to serve as conduit pipes for draining national resources.

vi) Over-extended scope of activities of most institutions, resulting in resources being spread too thinly on too many activities. Examples are DFRRI and Better Life Programme which covered almost every sector and overlapped with many other existing programmes.

vii) inappropriate programme design reflecting lack of involvement of beneficiaries in the formulation and implementation of programmes. Consequently, beneficiaries were not motivated to identify themselves sufficiently with the successful implementation of the programmes.

viii) absence of agreed poverty reduction agenda that can be used by all concerned federal, state, and local government NGOs, and the international Donor community.

ix) most of the programmes lacked mechanisms for their sustainability.

Oyesanmi, et al (2005) argue that the concern over increasing poverty levels especially in the developing countries and the need for its alleviation as a means of improving the standard of living of the people led to the conceptualization and implementation of various targeted or non-targeted poverty alleviation programmes worldwide. In Nigeria, both
the Nigerian government and donor agencies have been active in efforts to analyze and find solutions to the menace of poverty in the country. According to them, government Programme and agencies designed to impact on poverty which include; the Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRRI) that served as the major Programme established by the federal government of Nigeria with the aim of not only opening up the rural areas but also improving the conditions of the vulnerable poor. The programme was broadly conceived and hence saw all rural areas as its constituency. Unfortunately, according to them no attempt was made to prioritize its programmes to meet the need of the most vulnerable. Hence, the selection of project was not given adequate consideration. DFRRRI could not therefore achieve its lofty objectives because no standard was set for project harmonization. Thus, there was no effective mechanism for coordination among the three levels of government and between DFRRRI and the tiers of government, they argued.

To Okolie (2009), the persistent crisis of underdevelopment and poverty in most African States, especially Nigeria stems from the stark reality and wholesome adoption of capitalist modeled development cum poverty alleviation strategies on attainment of political independence by these past colonial states. Thus according to him, capitalism per se is not bad but as a mode of production, it is cultural and societal specific. Hence it approximates and indeed conjures with the prevailing material and immaterial resources and thus, manifest dominant state actions. Therefore, by universalizing capitalist oriented liberal democratic structures, the advanced western capitalist states willingly ignored local conditions of these Sub-Saharan States hence built the structure without foundation. While acknowledging the colonial legacy, social pluralism and its centrifugal tendencies, he argues that corruption among the post colonial leaders in Sub-Saharan Africa (Nigeria inclusive), poor labor discipline, lack of entrepreneurial skills, poor planning and incompetent management had indeed constrained and impeded sustainable development and poverty alleviation in Sub-
Saharan African States. Furthermore, he maintains that the capitalist pattern of development had indeed derailed the traditional relations of production in post colonial African states and the penchant for the post colonial political leadership to sustain the imbecile development pattern arising there from that is the root of development and poverty crises.

Arguing further, he contends that the history of development of most Sub-Saharan States showed political entities with great potentials for advancing development. Thus, African States with unique production forces rooted largely in communalism and glorification of handwork and practical achievements were derailed by factors of colonialism and internal sabotage. Communalism was considered outlandish though not uprooted. Meaning and reward for hard work was revised in favor of external interests and public wealth and resources in hitherto seem to be owned by all were appropriated and turned into objects of reckless appropriation and expropriation. More importantly according to him, the psychic motor and mental apparatuses of the people especially as it concerns development and collection project of survival was watered down, twisted and tainted with ideological deceit. However, he sums the latent anxious concerning the underdevelopment and persistent poverty crisis in the Sub-Sahara States in African in the following words:

i) the dislocated traditional social relation of production in Africa (Nigeria inclusive) undermine the development of industry, creativity, hard work and expansion of the productive base, as the producers are plunge into working without creating and consolidating the production base. This is because the actual producers are not integrated in the production process but made to remain impersonal workers, driven only by the quest to earn a living wages and only to satisfy the needs of external forces.

ii) the level pattern and intensity of social atomization reflect the dislocated traditional social relations of production. Indeed, social atomization in African reflects more of
debased traditional pattern of commercialized individualism and distorted modern orientation of extreme formal individualism, the blend of the two naturally degenerates into extreme criminalized individualism.

iii) the productive sector in such situation and as a corollary of the above is to say the least is dominated and managed by outstanding criminally-minded and unproductive actors whose material motivation is rooted in gross parasitism and unwholesome practices.

iv) as a corollary of the above, political leadership in most of these Sub-Saharan States of African encourage lopsided production activities and emphasize feudal related reward system which continuously undermine development pragmatism and achievement oriented atomization process. This is at the base of how Africans have continued to under develop Africa.

v) related to the above, most states in Sub-Saharan African manifest low autonomy low-need-achievement and internal self-destruction,

vi) development in the eyes of most political leaders in Africa is based on non-material institutions/structures. Human development is ignored or glossed over and such development enterprise largely emanate from western capitalist prescriptions which consolidate external economies and vitiate local conditions necessary for stimulating and enhancing sustainable human development.

vii) more fundamental is the fact that most of the imposed western development strategies regenerate impending/debilitating factors which recycle poverty, desecrate existent traditional institutions, values and ethics necessary for restoring the dignity of the citizens in the affected and/or receiving states. Regrettably, the trend is sustained by African leaders who benefit from the criminal development amputation.
To Alike (1981), the current poverty crisis and underdevelopment in Nigeria could be traced to colonization experience. Thus, according to him, colonialism never had in its blueprint any plan to develop Nigeria as of political and economically sovereign nation. Furthermore, there was no fundamental effort to groom the indigenous political activities on developmental strategies basically on how to harness the abundant human and material resources available for the development of the country. Colonialism imbibed the characteristics of exploitation and dependency syndrome into the nerves of the native politicians who took over governance of the nation on gaining political independence. He maintains that the need to develop the country especially the rural areas has forced different regimes to set up various poverty alleviation programmes to give both the rural people and the city-ghetto dwellers purposeful living standard and a new look. He argues further that these poverty alleviation programmes could not positively impact on the lives of Nigerians as a result of many militating factors such as political corruption and misdirected programmes.

From the array of literature reviewed it could be deduced that there has persisted poverty in Nigeria especially in rural areas since colonial and political independence. Equally, there is congruency in the views of scholars that several policy efforts have been made by different regimes even British colonialists in Nigeria towards poverty alleviation and national development. But the scholars reviewed accept that these various policy efforts towards poverty alleviation in Nigeria have not impacted positively on the lives of Nigerians especially the rural poor as a result of many factors such as political corruption among the political leadership and policy formulators and executors and misdirected projects and programmes. However, these scholars reviewed such as Olaitan, et. al (2000), Ngene, (2000), Dayo (2000), Maduagwu, (2008), Igbozuruike, (2000), Ugo and Okpere (2009), Uyanga (1993), Obadan (1996), Oyesanmi, et al (2005) etc failed to examine poverty alleviation programme in Nigeria through community effort especially as it affects Orsu communities in
Orsu Local Government in Imo State. It is therefore, this noticeable lacuna in the array of literature reviewed which the scholars have not adequately filled that this research study aims to fill.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

In view of the relevance of theoretical framework to empirical research, this study is principally anchored on System Theory. This theory has become imperative in this study because of its effectiveness and merit among other means for the study and understanding of social system and related phenomenon.

Classical proponent, David Easton (1965) perceives “politics as a whole and not as a collection of different problems to be solved”. Thus, his system model was driven by an organic view of politics, as if it were a living object. His theory is a statement of what makes political system as a set of human interactions. Easton identifies five concepts under which has model can be explicated, thus, political system is seen essentially as a system for converting inputs into authoritative decisions. To arrive at authoritative decisions the system takes inputs from the environment.

However, two types of inputs exist according to Easton, viz, demand and support. Demands are claims on how values are to be allocated. Support on the other hand, exist when the environment backs up the system or is favorably disposed to it. Output emerges from the system in the form of authoritative decisions. The environment reacts to these decisions or outputs and there is a process of feedback. Feedback is a process through which the system adapts itself to the environment by modifying its behavior and charging its interest structure. All these interactions culminate in the system maintaining itself in equilibrium.

Expatiating further, Igwe (2007) asserts that system theory draws significantly from the conclusions of structural functional analysis for inquiring into any integrity especially the examination of the nature of its internal organization. The inter relationship between the
components, between them and their collective environments and the consequences of these processes upon the survival of the system and attainment of its purposes. In other words, according to him, for an object to be considered a system, it must possess a level of integrity with a knowledgeable structure, a logically arranged part, such parts of elements must interrelate in a certain, law governed manner to fulfill a purpose or produce an ordered outcome. In the process of its life, a situation may arise in which more become imposed upon a system than it is structurally designed to handle. This may create strains and instability, raising the need for a return to normalcy (Igwe, 20007).

Notwithstanding this however, the following assumptions have been put forward by Easton (1965) for the system theory:

i) Political system as a unit or living being that is made up of different parts that function in an ordered manner for maintenance of system equilibrium,

ii) That changes in the social or physical environment surrounding political system produce “demand and support towards the political system through political behaviors.

iii) These demands and supporting groups stimulate competition in a political system leading to decision or outputs directed at some aspect of the surrounding social or physical environment.

iv) After a decision or outputs is made it interacts with its environment, these are ‘outcomes’

v) When a policy interacts with its environment, outcomes may generate new demands or support and groups in support or against the policy (feedback) or a new policy in some related matter.

vi) Feedback leads to (iii) above and it is never ending.
Therefore, system theories can gainfully associate with poverty alleviation through community – action in communities Orsu Local of Government Area of Imo State. To this end, Orsu communities are seen as a part of Nigeria as a political system and dependable variables whose poverty alleviation programmes are being affected or conditioned by such inherent systemic independent variables such as administrative and political corruption, human and material resources etc. In no doubt, the afore-mentioned independent variables that have continued to threaten the effective and efficient implementation of poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities are inherent in Nigeria as a political system. Most political and administrative institutions in Nigeria are known to be weak, volatile, and subservient and reactionary and the institutional framework for implementation of poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities are no exception. Thus, overall systemic decay has become the order of the day in Nigeria with its socio-economic and political consequences on the generality of the populace. As a result, Ikejiani-Clark and Eze (2008) contend that Nigeria the way it is presently constituted is a contradiction, contradiction in the sense that she is a land rich in natural and human resources, but endemic poverty is taken its toll on the generality of the populace, thereby preventing their sense of justice and moral discrimination.

1.8 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated to guide this study:

i) That poor funding impacts negatively on the poverty alleviation programmes in the Orsu Local Government Area.

ii) That corruption and mismanagement of available funds impact negatively on the poverty alleviation programmes in the Orsu Local Government
1.8.1 Methods of Data Collection

The method of data collection for this study is descriptive survey. Descriptive survey research refers to a process of eliciting data from a target population through either questionnaire or interview instruments, or subjecting such data to statistical analysis for the purpose of drawing conclusions (Obasi, 1999). The primary data for this study were obtained through the distribution of questionnaire which were designed for selected individuals of Orsu communities. In addition, oral interviews were conducted and in order to complement the information derived from the questionnaire. The aim is to give respondents the opportunity of supplying those information they may not give in our structured questionnaire. This study equally made use of secondary data such as textbooks, journals and unpublished works that borders on Orsu Local Government Area.

1.8.2 Validity and Reliability of Instrument

For the fact that the researcher is not an expert, the questionnaire and interviews guide were submitted to the supervisor for correction and amendment of instrument before and after it has been administered. And instruments were validated after the supervisor of this project has examined and criticized the questionnaire items and interview questions and made necessary adjustments.

1.8.3 Population of the Study

The 120 (one hundred and twenty) respondents of the Orsu Communities are combination of the respondents drawn from the various communities that make up the local government area. These respondents make up the population of the study but due to time limit and manageability and empirical conclusion, a sample was drawn from the population.
1.8.4 Sample of the Study

Sampling is the process of selecting a part (called a sample) from the whole (called population or universe) in order to make inference about the whole. A sample then is that small part selected from the whole or population. It is the sub-set of the population (Obasi, 1999). A sample of 92 respondents was drawn from the population through random sampling techniques. The formulae for the sample size to be used for the data collection and analysis will be drawn using Yamani (1968) formula sample size determination. The formular is represented.

Thus,

\[
\frac{n}{1 + N(e)^2} = N
\]

Where

\[
\begin{align*}
n & = \text{sample} \\
N & = \text{population} \\
l & = \text{constant, and} \\
e & = \text{margin error}
\end{align*}
\]

Therefore, our sample size

\[
\frac{120}{1 + 120(0.05)^2}
\]

\[
= \frac{120}{1 + 120 \times 0.0025}
\]

\[
= \frac{120}{1 + 0.3}
\]

\[
= \frac{120}{1.3}
\]

\[
= 92.307
\]
Table 1: Sample size distribution of the Orsu Local Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/NO</th>
<th>Communities</th>
<th>No of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Amaruru</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ebenator</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Eziawa</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Awo-Idemili</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Umuhu-Okabia</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>92</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Research Data 2011.

1.9 Method of Data Analysis

The research used the simple frequency and percentage (%) distribution table in presenting data and used simple percentage (%) formula is analyzing the data collected for the work. The formular was expressed thus,

\[
\frac{E}{N} \times \frac{100}{1}
\]

Where:

\( F \) = frequency

\( n \) = total number of respondents

\( 100 \) = the percentage

1.10 Operational Definitions

Poverty

Poverty is defined as “the state of being deprived of those opportunities and choice that we essential to human development for a long health, creative life, for a reasonable standard of living, for freedom, dignity, self-respect and respect for others”. Likewise, poverty is seen as a state of helplessness in man’s daily quest to satisfy his basic need of food, shelter, security, clothing and health (Nwobi, 2000:11). Whatever the case, poverty in
this study is seen as a state of inability of one or group of persons to satisfy the stipulated
basic needs for life.

**Community**

Community refers to a group of people living in a particular area and bounded
together by a common religion nationality and occupation. It is indeed, sub-set of society.

Thus, Orsu Local Government Area is made up of nine (9) communities namely,

- Amaruru
- Amannachi
- Assah-Ubirielem
- Awo-Idemili
- Ebenator
- Eziawa
- Ihitenansa
- Orsu-Ihiteukwa
- Umuhu-Okabia
CHAPTER TWO
THE POVERTY PROBLEM IN ORSU: ITS NATURE AND CHARACTER BEFORE AND AFTER 1999

2.1 Origin

Orsu is a clan in the Orlu Urban Local Government Area which metamorphosed into Local Government in Imo State. Orsu Local Government Area was carved out and created from the present Orlu Local Government in 1991 by the military regime of Ibrahim Babagida. The local government area covers approximately one hundred square kilometers land mass and bounded on the east by Orlu Local Government Area. In the West, by Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State. And in the south, Orsu is bounded by Oru West Local Government Area while in the north, it is bounded by Nnewi South Local Government Area of Anambra State. Besides, the local government is almost situated at the heart of Igboland (Okafor, 2001).

Morestill, the local government has its headquarter at Awo-Idemili and is made up of nine autonomous communities, namely, Amaruru, Amanachi, Assah-Ubirielem, Awo-Idemili, Ebenator, Eziawa, Ihitenansa, Orsu-Ihiteukwa and Umuhu-Okabia. Figure 1 over leaf shows the map of Orsu Local Government Area. Topographically, Orsu has two major and variant land forms. The level lands are prevalent in the Southern part, while the hilly land forms are prevalent in the Northern hemisphere. Both areas are susceptible to erosion menace causing constant land slides and devastating gullies. These, however form parts of the problems facing the local government area.

However, the local government was created to engender and ensure even development of the rural areas as well as perform other functions that would positively effect the lives of the rural poor and give them sense of belonging. Thus, according to Shehu (1976:1), in his address to the nation on the need to create more local governments in Nigeria.
It is the hope of the federal government that the new local government would bring about even and rapid development at the local levels through the country by fully motivating and utilizing the people at the local levels to participate in the development of their localities.

It was therefore, on the basis of the foregoing that local government was created in Nigeria by successive governments (civilian and military) and Orsu local government area is not an exception. To this end, and for local governments in Nigeria to discharge their statutory functions of engendering and providing basic needs and services at the grassroots, the 1976 local government reforms recommended well structured inter-governmental fiscal policies as enshrined in 1979, 1989 and 1999 federal republic of Nigeria’s constitution. In addition, the reforms fully recognized local government as third-tier government in Nigeria with well articulated revenue sharing formular and administrative arrangements and wide range of functions (Adamalekun, 2002).

Orsu Local Government Council therefore, came into existence following the technical report on Local Government services of 1988 set up by Ibrahim Babagida military regime. The report provide the structure of local governments system in Nigeria in the following respective order, Chairman as the Chief Executive and Accounting Officer, Vice-Chairman, the Secretary to the Council, the Supervising Councilors and Sectional heads (see figure 2 below). In line with this, Orsu Local Government Council has six departments, namely; Personnel, Works, Health, Agriculture, Finance and Planning and Research. All these departments are headed by the career civil servants, while a director of administration and general services coordinates the activities of the departments in the local government council. The local government performs such functions as provided by the 1988 Technical Report on Local Government services. These functions are classified into two namely, mandatory functions that include maintenance of market and motor park, sanitary inspection, refuse disposal among others. While permissive functions include, health, control of nursery, primary and adult education, public enlightenment, provision of scholarship and bursary among others.
ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF ORSU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF IMO STATE

Standing Committee
i) General Purpose Committee
ii) Education Committee
iii) Works Committee
iv) Finance Committee
v) Health
vi) Agriculture

Local Government Council
Chairman
Chief Executive and Accounting Officer
Deputy Chairman
Secretary
Head of Administration and Secretary to the Council


Extension Dept.
Personnel Planning
Finance Unit
Research, etc.

Finance Dept.
Revenue and Expenditure (Treasurer) etc

Education dept.
primary and Adult Education

Health department
Medical officer of Health or Health Superintendent

Works department
works Manager
Roads, bridges
Water Supply,
Town Planning
Open Spaces Fire Services

Natural Department
Natural Resources
Forestry
Agriculture
Veterinary

Other units
Information and Public Enlightenment
Social Welfare
Suffice the foregoing to state that before democratic inception in 1999 which had seemed to herald meaningful poverty alleviation effort throughout Nigeria, most poverty alleviation programmes in country were either sponsored by the federal or state governments. For instance, the colonial ten year plan of Development and Welfare for Nigeria that engulfed significant portion of the country’s wealth was meant for overall development of Nigeria and poverty alleviation especially as it affects the rural populace. The plan among other issues recognized the need for physical development of the country town and country planning, according to the plan documents were not intended to cover merely the expansion and designing of big towns, but would extend to all parts of rural areas of Nigeria (Little, 1987). However, the poverty alleviation programmes and national development effort of the British Colonial Government could not impact positively on the lives of Nigerians, as these programmes were directed towards extraction of surpluses from the rural areas including Orsu communities.

The urban-based national development and poverty alleviation efforts of the immediate post-independence era had indeed marginalized and massively impoverished the rural areas in Nigeria. Perhaps the ‘Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) of Obasanjo’s military regime that was principally focused at providing food at every table of Nigerians could have addressed the problems of rural poverty in Nigeria. But suffice this to state that the programme made little impact on poverty index in Nigeria as a result of many factors of which official corruption and misdirected programmes accounted most, (Uyanga, 1993). The subsequent poverty alleviation programmes prior to 1999 were indeed marked by one problem or the other. Such poverty alleviation programmes like the popular “Go back to land” and Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of Buhari/Idiagbon and Babangida respective military regimes were good effort but had suffered from many mitigating factors and failed to achieve their set targets. The same was the case with the Directorate of Food,
Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) meant for provision of basic needs of Nigerians such as food, shelter, portable water, good road among others.

Perhaps, the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) that was established in 1986 could have been a meaningful effort at alleviating poverty among the Nigerian populace and Orsu Local Government Area in particular. The Programme was meant to combat mass unemployment and to articulate potent policies aimed at promoting skill acquisition, self-employment and labor intensive potentials (Oyemoni, 2003). In addition, NDE, that currently has offices both at the federal, state and local government levels in Nigeria was meant not only combating unemployment and creating opportunities but also to engage with designing employment programmes in Nigeria. Although, official statistics had shown that the NDE has provided employment and business training for two million and four hundred thousand Nigerians respectively, poor funding, nepotism and official corruption have crippled the activities of the programme. As such could not cope with the needs of the over increasing number of applicants in Nigeria. This backdrop situation is worse in Imo State that is credited of churning out the highest number of graduates in Nigeria. Other subsequent poverty alleviation programmes such as Family Support Programme (FSP), Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), and Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) could impact positively on the poverty index in rural areas in Nigeria especially our case study communities.

However, the aftermath of military rule in Nigeria and subsequent inception of democratic governance in 1999 witnessed an appreciable level of poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria and in compliance to the western sponsored economic and welfare package of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the Third World and developing countries. Despite the federal sponsored programmes of poverty alleviation, different states and local governments in Nigeria have indeed, established different vision of these
programmes aimed at alleviating the ravaging poverty in the country especially in Imo State and Orsu Communities in particular. Thus, the federal government sponsored National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) that involved all the stakeholders like federal, state, local governments research institutions, civil society organizations, organized private sector, women groups and concerned individuals was aimed at addressing the aspects of absolute poverty and to eradicate them. (Okoye and Onyukwu, 2007). Accordingly, the co-coordinating federal body (National Poverty Eradication Council) was established and the activities of the Programme were meant to spread throughout the country. Among other silent issues, NAPEP was mandated to monitor and coordinate poverty eradication efforts in order to harmonize and ensure better delivery, maximum impact and effective utilization of available resources. The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) that was later launched as a follow-up to NAPEP was equally focused on reducing poverty through public sector reforms, privatization and liberalization, governance, transparency and anti-corruption, service delivery, budget expenditure reforms. Besides, it was equally aimed at provision of health facilities, education, environmental transformation, housing development, safety nets, gender and geo political balance and pension reforms (NEED Document, 2003). In addition, there are at present, several poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria such as cottage industries, skills acquisition among others sponsored by World Bank and United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP).

Despite the foregoing, federal, World Bank and UNDP sponsored programmes, Imo State government had since inception of democratic rule in Nigeria, established different versions of poverty alleviation programmes. The “sohghai” agricultural programme established by Achike Udenwa civilian administration in 2005 was aimed at reducing the importation of food items into Imo State and to provide food at every table of the Imo dwellers especially the rural poor (News watch, January 31, 2005). Besides, the programme
was equally meant to provide employment for the large array of unemployed and enhance internally generated revenue (IGR) base of the state. However, the urban-based activities of the Songhai programme and lack of adequate publicity among other factors had crippled the programme and could not achieve its set goals of poverty alleviation in Imo State and Orsu Local Government in particular (Newswatch January 31, 2005).

With high unemployment rate in Imo State, bad road networks and poverty, the Ohakim civilian administration subsequently embarked on a programme known as the Imo Rural Road Maintenance Agency, (IRROMA) to address these problems and provide access to rural communities. IRROMA was aimed at opening up the neglected rural areas and link all parts of the state as a part of the plan to make Imo State a one-city state and boast socio-economic activities of the state. ([www.imostate.gov.ng](http://www.imostate.gov.ng)). It was equally aimed at creating an active Works Department in each of the (27) twenty-seven local government areas of Imo State. Apart from ensuring constant maintenance and rehabilitation of the rural roads and infrastructures, IRROMA would create jobs for over 3,000 unemployed youths in the interim period and expand its structures and workforce with time. However, IRROMA had employed (27) twenty-seven civil engineers to drive the initiative in each of the (27) twenty-seven local government areas, (27) twenty-seven supervisors, (27) twenty-seven Drivers, (27) twenty-seven Equipment maintenance personnel and several skilled and semi-skilled workers to work in the Works Department in a move aimed at unleashing a rural revolution in Imo State. IRROMA had further plans to turn thousands of idle youths in the rural areas into casual workers that would drive the programme and turn them into the experienced staff that would continue driving the initiative thereafter ([www.imostate.gov.ng](http://www.imostate.gov.ng)). Subsequently, the following equipments and machineries were distributed to the (27) twenty-seven local government areas of the state.

i) a brand new caterpillar  
ii) a brand new tipper loader
iii) a brand new Toyota Hilux Van
iv) a brand new Bus for vigilante services
v) several brand new motorcycles for IRROMA Staff
vi) several new road maintenance equipments
vii) several cleaning equipments for local government clean and green initiative.
viii) Several Toyota, Hilux Toyota security patrol vans for police and other security agencies all over the state.
ix) Several brand new Chevrolet cars for the Imo municipal taxi scheme.
x) Several Trucks for the clean and Green Initiative of the government (www.imostate.gov.ng).

Furthermore, as a poverty alleviation strategy focused on opening rural roads and employment generation, IRROMA was given a mandate to deliver 300 rural roads in one month. IRROMA is a noticeable initiative that is sustainable in its programmes and would work all year round to not only open newer roads and accessible but also regularly maintain these roads in all seasons. Again, it works with communities making presentations about roads they feel should be worked on and getting responses in record time. At present however, IRROMA has gulped 4 billion Naira from the state coffers (www.imostate.gov.ng).

Notwithstanding the foregoing effort of successive Imo State civilian administrations and others sponsored by federal government and international organizations, such as UNDP, World Bank, IMF, to state that poverty index in Imo State especially, Orsu Local Government Area has in recent times soared tremendously. For instance, a recent study of selected local government areas, (including Orsu) in Imo State expressed in the table 1 below reveals that 82.5% of the respondents indicated the absence of poverty alleviation schemes that have impacted positively upon them and their respective families. Of the total number of respondents 98.1% indicated the absence of microfinance bank in their communities, while the total of respondents 83.4% have no knowledge of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Onyechere, 2010, 174). Some of these claims were equally authenticated by the findings of Onyechere (2003) and Iro (2008). The situation is similar in all six communities of the study.
Table 1: Level of awareness of MDGs and extent of reach of poverty alleviation Schemes/programmes in selected local government areas and communities in Imo State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Local Govt. Area</th>
<th>Schemes Present and has absent impact on you and your family</th>
<th>Schemes absent and has no impact to you and your family</th>
<th>Presence of microfinance bank</th>
<th>Absent of Microfinance bank</th>
<th>Aware of MDGs</th>
<th>Not aware of MDGs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oboama</td>
<td>E/Mbaise LGA</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eziawa</td>
<td>Orsu LGA</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D/nume</td>
<td>Nwangele LGA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umunna</td>
<td>Orlu LGA</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odunkwumere</td>
<td>Obowo</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umuokpara</td>
<td>Ehime Mbano</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


However, government officials in related agencies gave responses that were quite revealing on the extent of reach of their schemes. The respondent from Imo NEPAD (New Partnership for African Development) claimed they have toured the (27) twenty-seven local governments of the state on sensitization, workshop and also for planning the implementation of programme (Onyechere, 2008). On the geographical equality in the spread, they reported having sensitized people in three geo-political zones of the state and appointed local coordinators for the (27) twenty-seven local governments. The respondent from Imo LEEMP (Local Economic Empowerment and Environmental Management Project) claimed that they have interviewed 9 local governments and 150 communities. And for now, they are only in the pilot stage, subsequently, in the second phase, they will scale up to 18 local government areas which are the remaining local governments in the state. The local government they listed as having their presence including Aboh Mbaise, Ezinihite Mbaise, Ngor Okpala, Obowo, Ihite Uboma, Onuimo, Orsu, Njaba and Ohaji/Egbema, all of which span across the 3 geo-political zones of Imo State (Onyechere, 2008).
The study carried out by (Onyechere, 2008), equally revealed that the respondent from FADAMA II project in Imo State claimed that they have established their schemes in eleven local government areas of Imo State, namely, Ngor Okpala, Ahiazu Mbaise, Onuimo, Aboh Mbaise, Ohaji/Egbema, Ehime Mbano, Owerri-North, Orlu, Nkwere, Oguta and Ihite Uboma. And these according to them are evenly spread except for Owerri zone with excess of one local government area. Some of the reasons often advanced by poverty alleviation agencies in Imo State as hindrances to their activities are summarized in the table 2 below.

**Table 2: Reasons preferred by government officials of poverty reduction agencies as hindering planned project beneficiaries from benefiting in Imo State.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agencies</th>
<th>Reasons Proffered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NEPAD</td>
<td>i) Insincerity of community leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii) Politicization of programmes by politicians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEEMP</td>
<td>i) Conflict in some communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii) Doubt among community members on reality of planned intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii) Inadequate operation and maintenance of plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FADAMA II</td>
<td>i) diversion of funds by some beneficiaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii) Inability of some service providers contractors to deliver.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii) Capture of projects by elite and politicians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv) Insufficient funds from the funding agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDE</td>
<td>i) Available resources are too low to accommodate the number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii) Inadequate statistical data on the unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii) Lack of private sector participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv) Inadequate funding of the state government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEEDS</td>
<td>i) Lack of communication/participation on the part of the people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMO PAP</td>
<td>i) Reaching the real stakeholders is difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii) Interference by politicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii) Inadequate financing of projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Onyechere, 2008.*
Suffice the foregoing to state that Orsu communities have witnessed a great deal of neglect and sufferings even after Orsu were created as a local government. The state of infrastructural development in the area has remained very low. Thus, the backdrop situation has not allowed for human development and skills acquisition necessary for poverty alleviation among the rural dwellers. This is made worse by lack of access road necessary for enhancing the socio-economic activities of the people. As expected monumental poverty and wide range dissatisfaction have indeed, remained the plight of the people.

More still, it is noted that prior to democratic inception in 1999, there was no meaningful poverty alleviation programme in Orsu Local Government Area. Socio-economic infrastructures were non-existence and life among the dwellers was indeed so miserable that the youths have to drift to the Urban centers, (Orsu Local Government Council document 2005). As an agro based local government area, there was no access road to export agricultural products to urban areas for commercial purposes. As a result, these products often perished as there was not market for them and some other essential house-hold items that managed to find their way in Orsu markets were known to be very exorbitant. This is as a result of lack of competition resulting from poor road net-works. In addition, the agricultural extension services provided by the state government that could have enhanced agricultural activities of the Orsu people were seldom discharged. More still, there was little or no access to agricultural incentives such as loans and fertilizers, as they often entered into wrong hands. This situation was compounded by lack of industries and employment opportunities in the area. Thus, such micro-finance industries that could have alleviated the living conditions of the people through self or group employment were non-existence. As a result of poor road network and topography of the area, few individuals who could have on their own established such industries were deterred by the realities on the ground.
Besides, the power supply was erratic and the activities of such micro-finance industries could not have been enhanced. This had indeed exacerbated the poverty situation among Orsu communities. Literate level was so low among the communities and the level of educational attainment was a matter of who could afford it. Beside, the few existing primary and post primary schools were poorly equipped and maintained.

This backdrop situation had indeed, informed the noticeable efforts of various communities in Orsu local government area to embark on programmes aimed at alleviating their poverty even when such programmes like cottage industries, skills acquisition centres among others have recorded minimal impacts. Many factors have militated against these community self-help programmes and this study is an attempt to unravel those factors and to proffer solution to them.

2.2 Forms and Types of Poverty in Orsu

In every society, town or community, poverty is usually identified and categorized by the means of its numerous forms types and magnitude. Social Science scholars have indeed made noticeable efforts towards these directions. For instance, Trager (2003) had categorized poverty in the following ways:

i) house holds or individuals living below the poverty line and whose income and resources are insufficient to provide for their basic needs.

ii) House holds or individuals lacking access to basic service and other forms of support.

iii) People living in isolated rural areas that lack essential and basic infrastructures.

iv) Female-headed house-hold and the inability of the female to cope with the stress of the provision of basic needs.

v) Persons who have lost their jobs and those who are unable to find employment as a result of economic reforms.
Olaitan, et al (2001) categorized poverty as follows: intellectual, economic, political, technological, social and managerial poverty. Our study of the types and forms of poverty in Orsu communities therefore, fits in into this second categorization. Thus, according to Olaitan, et al (2001), intellectual poverty entails inability of an individual to use his power of the minds to reason and acquire knowledge for active participation in the society. Most communities in Orsu fit into this category. This is because education, which facilitates intellectual ability, is the business of the few rich in these communities and therefore the majority of Orsu people has no access to formal education and cannot meaningfully contribute to the development of their respective communities. As such, majority of Orsu people are meant to wallow in abject intellectual poverty. This situation is made worse by the high tuition fee charges by the few privately own primary and post primary schools and shortage of experience and qualified teachers and dearth in facilities in few public schools in Orsu communities. It is pertinent to note that most of the teachers are from the neighboring local government areas.

Economic poverty on the other hand, refers to lack of attention to coherent policy formulation that provides the analyzing environment to boost productive activities and economic prosperity of a given nation. This is as a result of the government not being able to secure sustainable growth in the economy and equal distribution of basic necessities of life. The individual that is economically poor has low or zero income to acquire basic needs such as housing, means of transportation and payment for water and electricity bills. The individual usually depends on others for basic need (Olaitan et al 2001). Thus, economic poverty among Orsu communities can be located and explained within the foregoing indicators as given by Olaitan, et al. As agrarian communities little or no policy effort has been made by the levels of government to provide such incentives such as fertilizer, loans or indeed extension services that can boost their agricultural activities. This situation is made
worse by lack of basic amenities such as pipe born water, electricity, good roads, etc and micro-finance industries that can boost the economic activities of the people and provide employment for the unemployed. As such the people of the communities have resorted to subsistent farming and other economic activities like basket making, palm wine tapping, petty trading, and Okada operation, among numerous others that hardly provides for their basic needs of life.

Political poverty refers to inability of the government of the day to transit democratically and articulate potent policies and programmes that can positively effect the lives of the subjects. An individual is politically poor when such person lacks the ability to participate in political process and express his/her ideas and aspirations to the members of his/her immediate constituency. Political poverty is known to be prevalent in Orsu communities, where the dwellers, as a result of abject poverty, lack adequate political orientation and capacity to participate in the political process. As such they often cry for political marginalization because of their inability to get fair share of such state and federal positions that could attract some basic amenities and development to their respective communities.

According to Olaitan, et al (2001) technological poverty involves application of absolute or crude technology in productive activities. This according to them often leads to low productivity, low consumption, low initiative and low capacity in terms of individuals and institutions. An individual that is technological poor depends on the initiative and technology of others and lacks the capacity to develop his/her own technology. Orsu communities, even after democratic inception in Nigeria in 1999, are known to be technologically poor and this has tremendous negative effect on their socio-economic activities. As agrarian communities, they use crude implements such as wooden hoes, machetes among others in agricultural activities and lack modern machineries that could lead
to quantum production that boost agricultural activities from subsistence level to commercial level. Besides, they lack basic technology for such other economic activities like palm wine tapping, oil mill, garri processing among others that could increase their income and for commercial production. The implication of this technological backdrop in Orsu communities is that their economic activities have only provided for their subsistence needs and thus lack adequate income necessary to meet up with other necessities of life such as good housing facilities, formal education among others.

Social poverty refers to a system of development that alienates individuals their preference and opportunities. Individuals that suffer social poverty are known to be bereft of those social institutions such as hospitals, markets, churches, banks, among others that could facilitate their social interactions and orientations. This situation applies in Orsu communities where for instance, the few existing government hospitals (health centres) are at near dilapidation with its negative effects on the health-care and interactions of the people. The few existing private hospitals are known to be poorly equipped and exorbitant and as a result of abject poverty, the Orsu rural dwellers could not afford to seek for medical attention in urban areas. Besides, there are no standard markets that could afford the people the opportunity to interact with one another and sell their economic and agricultural produce. As a result of poor road network, Orsu people have not been able to access urban markets to sell their economic and agricultural produce. Thus, these produce often perish with its attendant negatively effect on the people’s income. This is made worse by absence of micro-finance banks and lack of access to bank loans that could encourage quantum production.

In addition, managerial poverty refers to lack of tactful management and strategic control of mission and vision statement given organization of business. An individual is therefore suffering from managerial poverty within such a person lacks the autonomy and accountability in management of daily life activities and available resources. It is with little
doubt to state that managerial poverty applies to Orsu people. As a result of access to formal education necessary for acquisition of managerial knowledge and skills, the few available resources and income derived from their daily agricultural and economic activities are known to be grossly managed through polygamous and wasteful life-style. Besides, they lack proper orientation and knowledge of the existing government and non-governmental assistance in the form of agricultural loans and incentives and formation of cooperatives and making inputs in the decision circles of the government. Thus, they often resort to fate and ignorance.

The subsequent effects and consequences of the foregoing forms and types of poverty existing in Orsu communities are quite enormous and shall form our major discussion in the subsequent heading.

2.3 Consequences of Poverty in Orsu

The consequent effects of poverty in most underdeveloped state of the world especially Nigeria can hardly be over-emphasized. For instance, in Nigeria these effects are commonly witnessed in these communities that conserve abundant natural resources resulting from perceived injustice on them, in terms of equitable distribution of the resources by the Nigeria state. These communities that are commonly found in the Niger Delta region and other areas in such states in Nigeria where the constitutional clause of indigene and non-indigene dichotomy and distribution of the available resources/public positions have become problematic had indeed witnessed a great deal of instability in the form of kidnappings of prominent people and oil expertriates cum ethnic, tribal and religious crisis. To this end, Olaitan, et al (2001: 27) had contended that;

Poverty situation in Nigeria has led to such social vices like prostitution, corruption, armed robbery, human trafficking, fraud, kidnapping and such other effects like short-life span, high infant mortality, malnutrition, poor living and sanitary conditions and street begging.
In the same vein, emphasizing on the consequences of poverty, Mosley (2002:326) rightly observed that;

One of the consequences of poverty is the reduction of the farmers’ ability to bear risk and is thus less able to invest in high income generating activities associated with high risk.

Indeed to say that the consequences of poverty in Nigeria especially as it affects rural-urban migration and the attendant problems of national planning and development have not been pervasive is to say the least, and Orsu communities are not exception. In Orsu communities, the consequent effects of poverty is most noted in the wide spread of illiteracy among the people. As agrarian communities, their agricultural and other economic activities have not been able to generate enough income necessary for acquisition of formal education. This is because they are meant to produce at subsistence level as a result of lack of access to agricultural incentives, such as loans and fertilizers coupled with poor farm implements and basic social infrastructures. Thus, they have not been able to afford for the education of their children and wards within and outside Orsu Local Government Area. Their children and wards are therefore meant to drift to petty-trading, Okada riding, motor conductors, driving, majoring carpentering, palm wine tapping, hunting, basket making, among other economic activities that could hardly fend for their basic needs.

Besides, poverty situation in Orsu communities has equally led to such problems like ignorance of governments and non-governmental existing activities and opportunities that could help when fully appreciated and utilized to at least alleviate if not completely eradicate their poverty. This ignorance is as a result of poor enlightenment and proper orientation towards government and its activities. As such, communicable disease, hunger, malnutrition, poor housing and sanitary condition and above all population explosion as a result of poor family planning have become right in the communities. In addition, such problems like
prostitution and early motherhood coupled with inter-family and communal conflicts have equally become endemic in Orsu communities.

Again, as a result of poor educational background, Orsu communities have largely been marginalized at various levels of government. Such federal and state political positions and appointments like Board Chairman, State Commissioner for Ministry, federal minister and senate and house of representatives that could have attracted both state and federal presence and development have hardly been occupied by Orsu indigenes. As expected, the pre-valence of apathy against the levels of government and their activities has assumed mountainous dimension. This has equally bred frustration – aggression phenomenon in these communities.

Moreover, the current poor condition of people of Orsu communities has indeed led to high adult and child mortality rate. Mortality rate is often measured by the level of access to basic health facilities and services. It is not surprising however, to state that the public-health facilities in the local government area such as health centres are at near decay, and the few existing private hospitals charge exorbitant consultation fees and equally lack modern medical facilities and equipments. The Orsu dwellers especially the infants often die of such preventable and curable diseases like malaria, chicken pox, cholera, dysentery among others as they cannot afford for medical treatment in the urban areas.

The foregoing consequences of poverty situation in Orsu communities have generally resulted in the people of the communities migrating to Owerri and other urban areas in search for better greener pastures and good conditions of living with its negative effects on urban planning and development. Today, the population explosion in the Owerri and other urban areas and without corresponding provision of housing facilities and social infrastructures and services such as pipe-born water, waste management, electricity and employment generation in no doubt, has resulted to such problems and social vices like poor sanitary conditions,
over-crowding and spread of communicable diseases, high rate of unemployment, prostitution, armed robbery, street begging, picking pockets and child labour among others. The effort of the state government to address these problems is yet to yield positive result owing significantly to the fact that rural areas in the state have largely been marginalized in terms of extending social infrastructures and services to them.
CHAPTER THREE
COMMUNITY ACTION AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN THE ORSU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA SINCE 1999

Communal contribution and self-help has been the pivot of progress in every traditional Igbo community right from history. Thus, Igbo communities exhibit willingness and preparation of every individual, his status not withstanding, to contribute time, energy, money and materials for the common good of the community. This is often demonstrated in the communal work organized by the people of the same kinship groups, to assist their members in farm work when such members are sick and in building dwelling houses for member especially when there is fire disaster. Such other prominent communal activities in Igbo communities include the clearing and burning of virgin lands, construction of pathways or roads to streams and farm lands maintenance of clean hygienic environment, marriage, birth and death celebrations.

This age-long tradition of shared responsibilities for the welfare and progress of the community had indeed progressed and metamorphosed into self-help development and poverty alleviation not only in Orsu communities but also in most communities in Nigeria. In no doubt the emergence of urban town unions had contributed immensely towards community self help development and poverty alleviation.

More still, a colonial inherited urban based mode of development had indeed left urban centers developed and rural areas underdeveloped. Associated with the growth of these new urban settlements in Nigeria, a mass exodus of rural dwellers to urban areas gave rise to urban town unions. Thus, this phenomenon had hampered the agricultural practice at the rural areas. On the movement of Igbos from their traditional bases to urban centres. Aike (1981:2) had contended that;

The movement from the traditional base into the modern setting was motivated by complex factors but principally by economic
consideration. The desire to participate in economic activities which brought about monetary rewards than the traditional agricultural activities.

The Welfare Union therefore, developed in those urban centres catering for the interest of the urban migrants and providing link between them and their respective communities. The main objectives of the union was to obtain a form of getting together to discuss common problems mostly on how to develop and alleviate poverty in Orsu, based on their social experiences in the urban areas. Thus, the channeling of urban ideas and development of Orsu communities became the prime objectives. This orientation of developing their home communities brought about the ideas of general contribution of every adult individual, groups, town union organs, for the development of the community and this became compulsory every year. This yearly contribution is known as “Ahamefuna”. This contribution is made by every town branches outside Nigeria such as U.S.A, Britain, Canada, Germany and many West African countries. Also, the union encouraged individuals who are well to do and in government positions to help in any means and engage in the development and poverty alleviation of their communities by carrying out projects, donating generously and enormously to help projects.

This development and poverty alleviation through community action in Orsu had helped immensely in the area of medical services, roads and draining construction, provision of portable drinking water, education and scholarships, social services and cottage and micro-finance industries. This self-help project that involves community participation involves both men and women pulling resources together to achieve their common goal of developing and alleviating the poverty of Orsu dwellers.

At the top of administration in the Orsu local government, there exist Eze In-Councils and Orsu Consultative Council, and traditional rulers of various communities. The Ezes usually perform ceremonial functions while the town unions perform the major
administrative duties. But before any major decision is taken, it is table down to the “Ogbako Orsu” (that is consultative council) which is the gathering of the people representing each community. Thus, before any major decision is taken by the town unions, there must have been consultations with other groups that exist in the communities such as the Umunna of various communities and lineages, the age-grades, the Umuada who are still represented within the town union. The Umunna is an organisation of family lineages which involves families, groups and individuals, who feel or have blood relationship that brings them closer together as a binding power of their co-existence, which must be continued. They usually help in settling land disputes among family members and also matrimonial issues.

The age-grade function as a social mechanism, their traditional roles include maintenance of law and order, arbitration in civil matters, such as matrimonial disputes, land cases among others. The Umuada are solely charged with issues pertaining to women and unmarried daughters. It also extends to all daughters of the land both those married outside the town. If a woman fails in her role within the family, what the husband do is to report her to Umuada who will call the woman to order. They have powers to impose sanction on her or even pay fines. On the other hand, they can help calling to order a man maltreating the wife.

Notwithstanding the above mentioned community development and poverty alleviation programmes carried out by the Orsu Consultative Council or better called (Orsu welfare union) and various communities, the overage Orsu indigenes have continued to wallow in abject poverty and some reasons have accounted for it. In the course of our investigation concerning these reasons, we administered questionnaire to individuals in randomly selected five communities in Orsu Local Government Area. To this end, ninety two (92) questionnaires were distributed but only eighty (80) copies were returned. However, the available questionnaires and answers to the oral interview which were noted, were analysed appropriately.
SECTION A

Table 1: Sample size distribution of the Orsu Local Government Area:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>Communities</th>
<th>No of Questionnaires</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Amarum</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ebenator</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Eziawa</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Awo-Idemili</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Umuhu-Okabia</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>92</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Research Data 2011.

Table 2: Distribution on Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>80</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Research Data 2011

(“Frequency represents respondents all through the tables).

Fifty respondents representing 62.5% was male while 30 respondents making 37.5% of the respondents was female. The next table shows the number of respondents who was married and those who are single or divorces.
Table 3: Distribution on Marital Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>80</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The above table shows that 50% of the respondents were married, 37.5% single while a minority of 10 respondents were divorced. However, the table did not show their educational background and their job. This takes us to the next table concerning educational background.

Table 4: Distribution on educational qualification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OND/NCE</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HND/BSc</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master and above</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>80</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From the above table, none of the respondents had below secondary school certificate, 20 respondents representing 25% was school leavers. 30 representing 37.5% had their OND or NCE certificate, 20 representing 25% had B.Sc or HND certificates, while only 12.5% made up of 10 respondents had their masters’ degree. The next table shows occupational distribution of respondents.
Table 5: Distribution on Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil servant</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petty trader</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>88</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that 45.5% of the respondents was farmers, 21.6% was civil servants, 22.7% were petty traders and 10.7% indicated others. This group was mainly students and graduates, others were unemployed.

SECTION B
DATA RELEVANT TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research question one (1)

Question 1:

Does your community embark on self-help Poverty Alleviation Programmes?

Table 6: Percentage distribution on the responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>88</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table above shows that all the respondents indicated that their communities embark on self-help poverty alleviation programmes. However, on the next question that pertains on the types of the programmes that followed the respondents indicated the following, cottage industries, scholarship schemes, agricultural cooperative, skills acquisition schemes among others.

**Question 2: How does your community raise fund to accomplish designated projects.**

Table 7: Percentage distribution on response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General levy</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual donations and launching</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governments/Loans</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of the above</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>88</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that 42% of the respondents indicated the general levy as the main source of funds for designated self-help projects, 34.1% indicated that all the options given was means of find raising for projects, 21.6% indicated individual donations, while 2.3% indicated government grant/loans. This shows that most projects was sponsored by the communities themselves while government sponsorship is at a very minimal level. This was also indicated in the interview conducted with the Orsu Welfare Union known as Orsu Consultative Council, president, Okafor, C.O. and some members of its executive, which they indicated that government had yet to redeem their pledges for some projects organized by the communities.
Question 3: Does your community has a central body that handles self-help poverty alleviation projects?

Table 8: Percentage distribution on the response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows that the communities have central body that handles self-help poverty alleviation programmes as indicated by all respondents. The respondents however, indicated the central body as Town Unions.

Question 4: How often does your community embark or undertake on self-help poverty alleviation projects?

Table 9: Percentage distribution on the response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once a year</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every six months</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When need arise</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>64.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All year round</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>88</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows that 64% of respondent indicated that projects are organized when the need arises, 25% indicated that it does all year round, while 10.2% indicated that it
is just once a year. This shows that most projects executed by the communities are based on the basic felt needs of the people.

**Question 5: Do you agree that self-help projects in your community have alleviated people’s poverty?**

**Table 10: Percentage distribution on the Response**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreed</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreed</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>68.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>88</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that 31.25% indicated that self-help projects in Orsu communities have alleviated the people’s poverty, while 68.75% disagreed. This shows that poverty alleviation through community action in Orsu have less impact on the people’s poverty.

**Question 6: Do you think that poor funding contribute to the poor performance of poverty alleviation programmes in your community?**

**Table 11: Percentage distribution on the Response**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>71.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>88</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows that 71.6% of the respondents indicated that poor funding contributes to poor performance of poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities, while 25% indicated that poor funding does not contribute to the poor performance of poverty
alleviation programmes in Orsu communities and 3.4% were undecided. This indicates that poor funding contributes to poor performance of poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities. This is supported by an interview conducted with the Executive of Orsu Consultative Council known. The executive confirmed that as a result of poor funding from government and lack of donations cum remittance of pledges/levies by the people, poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu have not achieved the set targets and thus have less impact on the communities.

**Question 7:** Do you agree that poverty alleviation Programme in your community are affected by

(a) Corruption among community leaders
(b) Mismanagement/diversion of funds

**Table 12:** Percentage distribution on the response whether poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu are being affected by corruption among community leaders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>95.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>88</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that 95.5% of the respondents indicated that corruption among community leaders affects poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu while only 4.5% indicated otherwise.

**Table 13:** Percentage distribution on the response whether poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu are being affected by mismanagement and diversion of the available funds by the community leaders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>75.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>88</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table above shows that 75.5% of the respondents indicated that poverty alleviation programmes is being affected by mismanagement and diversion of the available funds by the community leaders, while 25.5% indicates otherwise.

**Question 8: Rank these factors in order of the impact on successful execution of poverty alleviation programmes in your community**

**Table 14: Percentage distribution of rank on successful execution of poverty alleviation programmes.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor leadership</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-governmental involvement</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>88</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows that 53.4% of the respondents indicated non-governmental involvement as the factor that most affect poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu. 22.7% indicated finance, 14.8% indicated corruption while 9.1% indicated poor leadership in terms of organization.
SECTION C

TEST OF HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1: That poor funding impacts negatively on the poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities.

Hypothesis 1 was drawn from our first research question and it was in a bid to provide answer to it that we arrived at the distribution in the table below.

Table 15: Distribution on whether poor funding impacts, negatively on the poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lack of financial support from the levels of government</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Non remittance of levy/donations by community members</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table, 62.5% made up of 50 respondents indicated that lack of financial support from the levels of government has greatly militated against poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities. We also gathered that 30.5% that is made up of 30 respondents indicated that poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities are most affected by non-remittance of levy and donations by the community members, while 8.0% comprising 8 respondents indicated other factors such as poor project planning and execution misunderstanding among community leaders among others as impediments to poverty alleviation through community action in Orsu.

It is with little doubt to state that community sponsored poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu such as cottage industries, skills acquisition programmes, rural
electrification and oil milling centres among others have suffered a serious set back before and after democratic inception in 1999. This is as a result of lack of adequate fund necessary for the execution of these poverty alleviation projects. Besides, the levels of government especially the Orsu Local Government Council and Imo State government have paid little or no attention in terms of financial assistance and allocations to these well conceived projects. Thus, these levels of government often advance some reasons on why it seems that they are reluctant in financing assistance to community conceived poverty alleviation programmes. These reasons include:

i) Insincerity on the side of community leaders about poverty alleviation programmes embark on.

ii) Conflict in some communities and their leaders

iii) Diversion of funds by some benefiting communities,

iv) Capture of projects by few community elites and politicians

v) Doubt among community members on reality of planned intervention.

As a result of the foregoing, therefore, these levels of government even non-governmental organization prefer embarking on separate poverty alleviation programmes in these communities. Unfortunately, these poverty alleviation programmes such as ongoing Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (LEEDS) and National Directorate of Employment (NDE) among numerous others have failed to impact significantly on the poverty index of the rural poor in Nigeria especially, Orsu Local Government Area.

Furthermore, non-remittance of levy and donations by Orsu community members had equally militated against poverty alleviation projects as our figure above indicates (30.5%). Based on the level of poverty in Orsu communities which is so high, the dwellers that are mostly subsistence farmers, local hunters, palm wine tapers, basket and mat makers among
others have not been able to remit part of the fund levied on them for poverty alleviation projects. This made worse by non-remittance of donations by few wealthy individuals of the communities. As such, poverty alleviation projects in these communities have attracted little funds, and as a result have suffered a very serious set back. This backdrop situation had indeed confirmed our hypothesis (1) that poor funding impacts negatively on the poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities.

Hypothesis (2): Corruption and mismanagement of available funds impact negatively on the poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities. In a bid to test this hypothesis therefore, we arrived at the distribution of table below.

**Table 16: Distribution on whether corruption and mismanagement of available funds impact negatively on the poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Diversion of project funds by the community leaders</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Insincerity in project conception and location</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Inflation of project fund</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>88</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table, 51.1% that made up of 45 respondents indicated that diversion of available project funds by the various community leaders militates against poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities, 21.6% representing 19 respondents indicated that insincerity in project conception and location has militated against poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities, while 27.3% that made up of 24 respondents affirmed that inflation of available project funds has impacted negatively on poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities.

As our statistical data of 51.1% representing 45 respondents specified, it is a well known fact that in Orsu communities, poverty alleviation programmes have suffered a very serious set back as a result of diversion of the available project funds by the community
leaders. As such, funds that are meant to be used in the execution of poverty alleviation projects such as cottage industries and skills acquisition programme, scholarship schemes, agricultural incentives among others are used for sectional or personal gains. As a result, these projects are often executed halfway and meant to dilapidate and not to achieve the set targets. For instance, the popular Orsu modern skills acquisition centre located at Ihitenansa, that is sponsored by Orsu Welfare Union known as Orsu consultative council known to have gulfed millions of Naira since the foundation laying ceremony in 2001 without completion. Morestill, the rural poor dwellers in Orsu communities are meant to pay heavily for the successful execution of this project with little or no important and accountability. Worst still is the inflation of project funds which according to our investigation represents 27.3% of 24 respondents.

Besides, insincerity in project conception and location has equally militated against community sponsored poverty alleviation projects in Orsu communities. To this end, 21.6% that represents 19 respondents affirmed to this fact. The community leaders in Orsu have not been sincere enough in conceiving poverty alleviation programmes that would have greater impact on the people. Thus, poverty alleviation programmes are conceived and located in as much as these programmes would serve the interest of the community leaders. For instance, the huge amount of money that has been so far spent on Orsu modern skills acquisition centre could have been well utilized if the money was channeled towards building cottage industries such as garri processing industries, oil milling centres, etc since agriculture is the main stay of Orsu communities. The foregoing has however, confirmed our hypotheses that corruption and mismanagement of available funds impact negatively on the poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities.
CHAPTER FOUR
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Summary

In our investigation of poverty alleviation through community action and using, Orsu Local Government Area of Imo State, two main research questions was raised. The first question sought to know if poor funding impacts negatively on the poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities. The second question on the other hand, tried to find out if corruption and mismanagement of the available funds impact negatively on poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities. The broad objective of the study dwelt on the assessment of the poverty alleviation through community-action, using Orsu Local Government Area of Imo State as a case study. However, two main specific objectives arising from our research questions were identified. The first was to find out whether poor funding impacts negatively on the poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities. The second objective on the other hand, was to find out whether corruption and mismanagement of the available funds impact negatively on the poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities.

The overall theoretical and practical significance of the study were stressed. Our literature review revolved around the two main research questions posed. At the end, gap in literature was identified. This research derived its justification from the fact that it tried to fill the gap noticed from the array of the existing scholarly works on poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria. And in doing so, provide a framework on which the problem could be addressed.

The theoretical framework used in this study is classical system theory as propounded by David Easton (1965). The relevance of this theory to the study has on its scientific and historical interpretation of the problem militating against poverty alleviation through
community-action in Orsu communities. This, in no doubt will help us to understand the problems and to provide a viable framework under which the protracted crisis of poverty in Orsu communities could be resolved.

Deriving logically from the research questions, two hypotheses were posed in which we argued that first, poor funding impacts negatively on the poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities. Secondly, we further argued that corruption and mismanagement of the available funds by the community leaders impact negatively on the poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities.

We adopted description survey method of data collection for this study. This method is mainly used to elicit data from a target population through either questionnaire or interviewing instruments and subjecting such data to statistical analysis for the purpose of drawing conclusions. To this end, the primary data for this study was obtained through the distribution of questionnaire which was designed for selected individuals in Orsu communities. In addition, oral interviews were conducted and in order to complement the information derived from the questionnaire. The aim was to give the respondents the opportunity of supplying those information they could not give in our structural questionnaire. Aware of some limitations, the questionnaire and interview guide were submitted to the supervisor of the study for corrections and amendments before and after they have been administered. This study equally made use of secondary data such as textbooks, journals and unpublished works and documents that border on Orsu Local Government Area. Our conclusion and recommendations were logical outcomes of the preceding analysis.

4.2 Conclusion

This research was principally aimed at assessing poverty alleviation through community action using Orsu Local Government Area in Imo State of Nigeria as a case
study. It argues in tandem with the systemic problems in Nigeria that poor funding, corruption and mismanagement of the available funds among other noticeable problems have indeed militated against the noble objectives of community sponsored poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities since 1999. These have manifested in the form of non-payment of community levies and remittance of donations/pledges, lack of funding schemes from the levels of governments especially Orsu Local Government Council and Imo State government and outright diversion of the available projects funds by the community leaders coupled with ill-conceived and inflated poverty alleviation projects and locations. As such most of these poverty alleviation projects have remained uncompleted and the few completed ones have not properly fend for the people of Orsu communities. To this end, the poverty index in Orsu communities has not been reduced rather it has continued to loom.

4.3 Recommendations

The modalities for addressing the relatively history of protracted poverty in Orsu communities have indeed called for a more pragmatic and viable framework. Instead of sheer politicization of poverty alleviation programmes in Orsu communities by their leaders and different levels of government, the multifaceted spheres of influences and powers should be captured, harnessed and engaged within the context of local idioms and communal development and poverty alleviation. Without doubt, the importance of culturally remained strategy and greater indigenous inputs for poverty alleviation in Orsu communities has largely become inevitable. To this end the following recommendations have been put forward.

1) That the choice for community leaders should be democratized to enable individuals with vast experience and knowledgeable enough to determine appropriate poverty alleviation programmes to be conceived and where to locate them.
2) That different levels of government especially Orsu Local Government Council and Imo State government should not only endeavour to adequately finance communal conceived poverty alleviation projects but also allowed for greater indigenous participation in their sponsored poverty alleviation projects.

3) That poverty alleviation project monitoring committee that enjoys greater indigenous membership should be set up by Imo State government in synergy with Orsu Local Government Council that would ensure efficient management of the available funds in execution of government and communal poverty alleviation projects.

4) Those social infrastructures that are cost effective such as electricity and tarred road that can enhance economic and agricultural activities of Orsu people should as a matter of urgency sponsored by the levels of government in Orsu communities. In no doubt this will help them generate enough income that will enable them provide basic needs of life.
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UNDP Report in Nigeria 1999
UNDP Publication 1999
NEED Document 2005
UNDP Publication 2006
The Third National Development Document 1978
World Bank Report 2002
Orsu Local Government Document 2010

Newspapers/Magazines

Internet Sources


Research Work

APPENDIX I

SAMPLE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Political Science
University of Nigeria,
Nsukka.
5th October, 2010.

Dear Respondents,

I am a postgraduate student of the Department of Political Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. I am currently carrying out a research project on the topic, “Alleviating poverty through community-action: A case study of Orsu Local Government Area”. To make the research a huge success, the researcher is requesting you to fill this questionnaire by indicating (Yes) or (No) in the relevant options provided.

The research is however purely on academic exercise and any information supplied will be considered confidential and treated as such.

Thanks for your kind response.

Yours faithfully,

Okpara F. K
Researcher
QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A
1) SEX (a) MALE ( ) (b) FEMALE ( )
2) Occupation: Trader ( ) Teacher ( ) Civil Servant ( ) Farmer ( ) Self Employed ( )
3) Educational Qualification: FLSC ( ) WASC ( ) NCE ( ) B. Sc/HND ( ) M.Sc/Ph.D ( )

SECTION B
1. Does your community embark on self-help poverty alleviation programmes?
   Yes ( ) No ( )

2. How does your community raise funds to accomplish designated poverty alleviation projects?
   i) General levy ( )
   ii) Individual donation and landing ( )
   iii) Government grants/loans ( )
   iv) All of the above ( )
   v) Others ( )

3. Does your community have a control body that handles self-help poverty alleviation projects?
   Yes ( ) No ( )

4. How often does your community embark or undertake self-help poverty alleviation projects?
   i) Once a year ( )
   ii) Every six months ( )
   iii) When need arises ( )
iv) All year round

5. Do you agree that self-help projects in your community have alleviated people’s poverty?
   Agreed [ ] Disagreed [ ]

6. Do you think that poor funding contributed to the poor performance of the poverty alleviation programmes in your community?
   Yes [ ] No [ ]

7. Do you agree that poverty alleviation programmes in your community are affected by
   i) Corruption among community leaders [ ]
   ii) Mismanagement/diversion of funds [ ]

8. Rank these factors in order of their impact programmes in your community?
   i) Poor leadership [ ]
   ii) Finance [ ]
   iii) Non-government involvement [ ]
   iv) Corruption [ ]