

SOCIAL SAFETY NETS AS HIGH WAY TO POLITICAL CLIENTELISM IN NIGERIA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF ITS CONSEQUENCES

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Abstract

Most African countries, including Nigeria initiated social safety nets programmes in recent time as part of a broader strategy to ameliorate poverty. Unfortunately, these Programmes have become politicized used as instrument by political leaders striving to win and remain in public offices by any means possible. Hence, this paper examines motives behind safety nets and its genuineness in Nigeria, it shall strive to find out the level of political influence on the implementation of the programmes, and discuss as well the consequences of shifting the focus of social safety nets from welfare delivery to political patronage. It relied on secondary data that were content analyses, as the study is a descriptive one. The study discovered that social safety nets were established to ameliorate poverty and enhance economic capacity building among vulnerable members of the society but unfortunately it has been overtaken by political leaders for electoral benefits. The study also found that the 'real' vulnerable and poor were not captured in the programmes and as ways out of challenge, there is need for more publicity and education by the government agencies to enlighten general public on the right to access social safety net scheme. Furthermore, it recommended that social safety nets should be restructured to be void of political inclination.

Keywords: Social safety Nets, Clientelism, Beneficiaries, Politicians, Nigeria.

Introduction

Over the past three decades neoliberal social policy were implemented with the assistance of the international Monetary Fund and the World Bank in many developing countries. Unfortunately, the majority of these policies were obscured with politics and implementation bottlenecks. Even policies formulated singlehandedly by African politician aimed at attaining radical and progressive improvement in their economics following several decades of colonial rule were tainted somewhat by neoliberal thinking (Crindle, 1980).

Social safety nets are critical to reducing poverty because they support inclusive growth and provide resources to the most vulnerable in society. Although the World Bank traditionally viewed them as mechanisms for redistributing income and improve the welfare of those unable to participate in productive activities, Social safety nets are now also seen as critical for the growth agenda (Bastagali et al, 2016). As the Nigeria population becomes increasing and economy to support these uncontrollable population remain invisible, more attention are dragged toward introduction and adaptation of social safety nets to assist the poor and vulnerable. Currently, the impacts of Social safety nets have been discovered in terms of

consumption, and food security which make a foundational case for investing more in it as it being viewed as vehicle to address immediate reduction of poverty in Nigeria. Social safety nets also show strong potential for building risk management capacity and promoting resilience.

Be as it may, regardless of prominence and visibility of social safety nets programmes, they have become more central as a topic for political branding and electoral campaigns in Nigeria and other African countries. In many cases, individual, political leaders seek to associate themselves with particular programme to induce electorates. For example, Prime Minister Mosisili was a key figure pushing for the adoption of the Old Age Pension in Lesotho, which become highly politicized in its delivery to the point which pensioners regularly talk of going to 'collect the Mosisili (Granvik, 2015). Similarly, President Khama of Botswana portrayed expanded public employment programme as his direct contributions, leading to the frequent references to 'Our Father's Programmes' (Hamer, 2016).

Apparently, social safety nets have become a more integral part of political debate and electoral promises. In highly competitive settings such as Malawi, safety nets have been used by some presidential candidate as a 'brand' to differentiate themselves from political rivals during election campaigns (Hamer, 2015). It is concluded by Zucco (2013) that social safety nets (cash transfers) bring electoral benefits to incumbents. In Brazil, Bolsa Familia significantly increased the incumbent's vote share in all three presidential election from 2002 to 2010, increasing the probability of the poorest voters closing the incumbent by 32 percent in 2006 and 21 percent in 2010.

Undeniably, politician making promise regarding the policies and programmes they intend to embark on once in office is a tenet of democracy. Their promises afford electorate adequate information with which to appraise diverse political parties and guide them on where to cast their votes and further enable voters to hold politicians to account for the success or failure in delivering on their promises. Against this backdrop, social safety nets remain a puzzling situation in Nigeria politics as it has been incorporated into party manifesto and programmes. Politicians in Nigeria have deviated from programmatic mobilization that entails promising and delivering goods to all member of society, regardless of whether they voted for a particular candidate or not.

Political history of Nigeria has been connected with manipulation and all forms of electoral malpractices. There were cases of ballot snatching, stuffing, over-vote rigging and vote buying. Obviously, improvement in the electoral processes in recent time checkmates some of aforementioned vices, especially through the use of electronic device for registration and accreditation. Individual vote buying have become difficult by secret ballots, which limit the ability of political parties to effectively monitor individual votes, this required capacity and manpower that the majority of political parties in Africa lack (Van de Walle, 2014). Although, it is observed that the design of social safety nets, especially cash transfer programme, which increasingly rely in electronic transfers and contain oversight mechanisms, seems somehow difficult to be used by politicians as instrument of manipulation. But the conscience of this study is the neutrality and transparency of official involved in the registration and compilation of names of beneficiaries. Existing studies only paid attention to the study of the

impact of social safety nets on economic wellbeing of the vulnerable in Nigeria. This study will therefore contribute to the ongoing debates on how safety programmes have become instrument of inducement for politician to gain electoral benefit at the expense of welfare service delivery in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following objectives. In other words, the study has the aim to:

- i. review the modus operandi of social safety nets programme;
- ii. determine the level of political influence on the implementation of social safety nets programmes, and
- iii. examine the challenges confronting the implementation of social safety net programme in Nigeria mass illiterate society.

Significance of the Study

The study provides information on the extent to which politician influence the registration and compilation, of the beneficiaries and implementation of social safety nets programmes in Nigeria. It serves as relevant material for effective planning by providing a basis for viable and sustainable for programmes, which enhance welfare service delivery and ameliorate poverty in Nigeria. Hence, this is useful to policy makers, the public servants saddled with the responsibility of implementing the programmes to improve service delivery. Equally, the study add to the body of literature in Political Science (public policy analysis). It will be useful for academic researchers who might want to conduct study on implementation of welfare service delivery policy in Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopts qualitative method in carrying out its investigation and used content analysis in its discussion. The data employed for the study were gathered from secondary source where journal article, newspapers, periodic papers and document materials among others were reviewed.

Theoretical Framework

The study is more predicated on Social Contract Theory. The Social contract can be defined loosely as a sot of hypothetical or actual agreement between society and its state. The agreement has been said to be responsible for the basis of our moral decisions and stances (Hume, 2000). In another words, we merely abide by the government rules and regulations in the hope that others will do the same. Subsequently, leading to a more secure and comfortable life (Cathingham, 2005).

Contract theorists Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean Jacque Rousseau and others hold the view that individual in society have a natural right to choose whichever form of government they want on the basis of a contract. The takeoff point of these theorists is the fact that men uniting into commonwealth and putting themselves under government is the preservation of their property. In this vein, Eminue (2008) submits that good government is to be determined in relation to two tests: Competence in the management of public affairs, and its capacity in promoting the general advancement of the community. A social contract involves interplay between a society's expectations that the state will provide services to and secure revenue

from its population, backed by will of policy makers to direct public resources and the capacity of government to fulfill social expectations (OECD, 2008; Rousseau, 1968). The synergy between social contract and social safety nets rests on the role of government to provide welfare services and make life comfortable for the citizens through its institutions, agencies and policies. Anosike (2016) averred that available evidence demonstrates that there is increasing rate of poverty among Nigeria. This portrays the level of untrust and insincerity of the leaders. As unemployment looms, per capital income is low and high of inflation has not been addressed, safety nets emerges as a response to changing social contract over time as increasing member of society benefit from the schemes.

Conceptual Clarifications

Social Safety Nets

According to Grosh et al (2007) Social Safety Nets are noncontributory programmes targeting the poor or vulnerable. They may designed, implemented, and supported by governments, international organizations or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). This implies safety net programmes are different in entirety to other forms of social protection, whereby prior contributions and participation in the labor market determine benefit eligibility. In another dimension, social safety nets could be seen as the set of all initiatives, both formal and informal, that provide social assistance in extremely poor individuals and households, social services to groups who need special care or would otherwise be denied access to basic services; social insurance to protect people against the risks and consequences of livelihood shock; and social equity to protect people against social risk such as discriminations and abuse (Devereux and Sabates - Wheeler, 2004).

Social safety nets are becoming an explicit part of microeconomic policy reforms. In the recent context of fiscal tightening, many countries are initiating policies to provide relief packages for their citizens. In many cases, emergency response programmes initiated outside the coverage of safety nets have resulted into political buy-in and delivery infrastructure on which programmes have been developed. Obviously, a poorly targeted and expensive programme, may save public resources, but also negatively affects segments of the population. For example, in Sierra Leone first wave of removal of subsidies in October 2016 resulted in a price hike potentially harmful to the poor. This prompted the Government and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to discuss linking any further wave of subsidy removal to further expanding the safety net programme. In some countries in Asia, programmes have also been expanded as part of an effort to stimulate economic growth. Example include the expansion of social pension systems in China and Thailand during the global recession (ADB 2009; Kidd and Damerau 2016; Suwanrada and Wesumperuma, 2012).

Apart from identified poverty and vulnerability that are considered as factors of social safety nets other factors include political crises. In Senegal, where rising fuel and food prices following the 2008-09 financial crisis, alongside the decline in the important peanut and fishing economies, contributed to political demands for regime change and Macky Sall's emphasis on social programme following the 2012 election (Ndiaye, 2017). In Kenya, in response to the violence that followed the 2007 elections, the government launched a public works programme targeting young people in poor and vulnerable communities, and initiated a cash transfer programme in Nairobi, later expanded to Mombassa. Climate stress, natural

disasters, social tensions, economic crises and reforms, external and internal shocks are parts of factors that bring about establishment of safety net programmes.

Social safety net programmes are capable of imparting positively the local economy, especially if the selection process is handled in a way that minimizes stereotype threats and resentment from non-beneficiaries. Safety nets may promote greater empowerment for their individual beneficiaries as well as greater cohesion in communities. Besides, safety net programmes can bring governments closer to beneficiaries by showing how they can effectively respond to their need. New programming can offer important-entry-points for shifting interaction between governments and individuals (Jones et al. 2016). There is no doubt, that safety net can shape smooth and frequent relationship between representative of the government and individuals. For example Ghana beneficiary forums was initiated to provide awareness of the duties and responsibilities that accompany cash transfers which provided opportunity for beneficiaries to interact directly with government institutions and helped encourage a “partnership” between the government and beneficiaries (Oduro, 2014).

Furthermore, social safety nets can reinforce strong participation of the beneficiaries towards government policies, for instance by creating awareness on the need to obtain national identity numbers or cards, permanent voters cards, BVN and others. In South Africa, showing a valid birth certificate has been a condition for receiving the Child Support Grant. Social Safety nets may induce changed in discourse on poverty and role of government and public policy, including perception of obligations from the government to fulfill certain rights. Social safety net programmes can help build awareness that individuals are rights-holders, especially if combined with language around human rights and awareness campaigns that aim to increase access to information about the right to social protection or rights related particular programme (Dang and Dabalen, 2017). Osofian (2011) remarks that Hunger Safety Net Programme in northern Kenya exposed beneficiaries the right to hold local government to account on social protection scheme on service delivery. Further, that in Sierra Leone, confidence in the safety net programme is reported greatly improved by the fact that grievance redress is handled by the independent Anti-Corruption Commission.

Political Clientelism

Political Clientelism involves an unequal exchange whereby the patron trades the distribution of money or other resources for votes and other forms of support (Kitschelt 2000, Van de Walle, 2007). Clientelism is viewed as political manipulation and politicking that brings electoral benefit to a particular party at the expense of general interest owing to promises through policies and programmes that are rebranded as party’s programme. This is different from programmatic mobilization which involved politicians promising and then delivering goods to all members of a particular group, regardless of whether they as individuals voted for the candidate in question (Stokes, 2007). The major attributes of programmatic mobilization is that provision and promises are not personalized as it portrays in clientelism. Political clientelism is problematic for two reasons, especially in a mass illiterate environment. First, because patronage can undermine democratic processes enabling political elites to secure the political support of the poor who are likely to be willing to give their support to a party, that is associated with a particular social safety net programmes, while ignoring their interests. Secondly, because social safety net benefits delivered as patronage would be

distributed based on the political importance of would- be recipients, rather than their needs, likely undermining the objectives of the programme (Stokes 2007).

Overtime, safety net programmes have become instrument of political clientelism in the developing countries especially Nigeria where such programmes have been rebranded and tagged with names like “beta don come”, “oko arugbo”, ‘owo arugbo’, ‘idera yiole’ etc. Obviously, voters tend to reward politicians for safety net programmes when they are manipulated to become party’s programmes. Evident from governorship election in Ekiti State revealed the extent at which safety nets critically influence voting behaviour and electoral outcomes mostly from cash transfer programmes. Beside, evidences over the world show that there is likelihood that incumbents gain electoral benefits during election because of safety net programmes. In Brazil, Bolsa Familia significantly increased the incumbent's vote share in all three presidential elections. In Colombia, Familias en Accion beneficiaries were more likely to register to vote, cast a ballot, and vote for the incumbent party in 2010 presidential election (Baez et al 2012).

Though, it has been argued that these effects may last for a while, but seem to decline over time, and that social safety net programmes can equally push non-beneficiaries to defect from the incumbent. Correa and Cheibub (2016) remarked that while beneficiaries were more likely to support the incumbent, there are also often increases in defections from the incumbent’s electoral base among voters who oppose the programmes (in countries with large visible programmes). In another dimension, electoral returns one reported for local officials, sometimes in place of returns for national level elected officials, as voters often seem unclear about whom to credit for safety net programmes and may mistakenly attribute programmes to the wrong level of government or wrong institution (Pavao, 2016). This might not be the result in Nigeria where there is strong connectivity and structural maintenance and monitoring among the ‘parties’, organogram and hierarchy among the three levels of governments.

Beneficiaries in this context are considered as individuals who are presumed usually living in poverty or experiencing some considerable livelihood risks and vulnerabilities. Benefits are designed to provide relief to these individuals/families to enable them cope with their circumstances. While poverty associated to beneficiaries in this context, is the state of a person who lacks sufficient resources including material possessions and money.

Motive behind Establishment of Social Safety Nets

By motives, we mean the pull and push reasons that predispose the Federal Government of Nigeria to embrace social safety nets as mechanism to eradicating or ameliorating poverty in the society. Social safety nets are to reduce property and inequality which have large coverage and emphasize both poverty reduction and capital goals. Nigeria government was on right track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by securing Nigerians from socio-economic consequences of increasing weather variability, natural disasters, and internal conflicts. Social Safety nets are used to protect vulnerable people by providing liquidity, offering short-term employment, and discouraging negative coping mechanisms. These schemes are oriented toward outputs of intermediate outcomes, improving school enrollment or attendance and have become increasingly popular with Nigerian government because they

transfer money to poor households under conditions usually related to investment in human capital of their children.

As it is, social safety nets are but one of a variety of tools designed for poverty reduction, social risk management, and social protection. They are purposed to protect and improve households' investment in human capital, immediate consumption, poverty status, productive investments strategies and to some extent, abilities to mitigate the negative impacts shocks. Further, to increase educational attainment and income growth. Captured in the programmes are vulnerable people such as children, including orphans, women, the elderly and persons living with disabilities. Others are migrants of displaced population, the unemployed, and the sick.

Social safety nets were also motivated to affect the country's economy positively. Apart from their effects on beneficiaries, they are perceived to bring positive spillover effects non-beneficiaries. Hence, the positive changes in the behaviour of beneficiaries diffuse to non-beneficiaries then, there is usually a corresponding change in the economy. This may equally raise hopes of amongst non-beneficiaries of subsequent participation in social safety nets programmes. However, the spillover can as well enhance the perception of citizens about the institution of government and polices.

Another encouraging motive of social safety nets is the government intention to demonstrate state power and the ability to provide basic programme to citizens and this maintain some level of authority and popularity. It implies that some of the social safety net schemes are politically motivated, not only to bring welfare service delivery but to promote and sustain popularity of government. Moreover, the schemes are considered as mechanisms to keep young people employed to minimize political and security concerns. Owing to the fact that, insecurity and political crises in Nigeria are not unconnected with unemployment among youth, some of the social safety nets are committed towards getting Nigeria youths engaged and busy which might divert their attention from social vices.

Notably, concern about vulnerable Nigerians in the context of economic hardship has driven the objectives and targeting of many of the programmes, leading to an emphasis on those people who are ultra-poor, labour-constrained, with prevalence of adverse health conditions, elderly and/or caring for orphan and vulnerable children. Moreso, regular provision of cash through social safety nets may help households overcome various constraints associated with missing or poorly functioning markets for goods, inputs, labour, and financial services, and promote greater productivity and income. Conclusively, the Government of Nigeria realizes the urgent required to turn the tide of poverty and vulnerability in the country prompts the establishment of social safety nets in support of all other pro-poor agendas.

Factors Responsible for Political Clientelism in Nigeria

According to Adeola (2012), power is sweet and virtually every politician desires to possess it. Thus, many politicians who hold elective post(s) would not want to lose it and might employ crude means to retain such position(s). The desperation for power is not unconnected with the way virtually everything is becoming political in Nigeria. This predicates people interest and making themselves relevant in the scheme of things as well including amassing

of the national wealth through victory in election. Historically, Nigeria electoral processes have been overwhelmed by malpractices, such as rigging, over-voting, multiple voting, ballot stuffing and snatching and a host of others. In the recent time, the prevailing electoral vice is vote-buying. This occurs when electorates cast their votes for exchange of money or other valuables. Although individual vote buying has become somehow difficult nowadays because of secret ballot system of voting, it demands ability of political parties to effectively monitor individual votes which requires a lot of manpower presence.

“No doubt, the use of electronic devices in the registration and accreditation of electorates reduce the menace of all aforementioned electoral malpractices. This is not saying that, there is outright escape from vote-buying rigging, ballots stuffing and others, but politicians find themselves in a tight corner nowadays wanting to attain electoral victory through these dubious means. Obviously, using social protection programmes have become the last resort of politicians in Nigeria, especially the ruling party. There are a lot of rebranding of social safety nets, giving different names and slogans, such as ‘beta don come’, ‘oko Arugbo’ in Nigeria. Many Nigerians, especially, the rural dwellers struggle to be enlisted in the programmes just to benefits from the free money and has become a ‘bait’ with question during political rally and campaign, ‘do you want this cash transfer to continue’. Nigerians love free money and their responses are ‘let it continue’ this usually leads to voting for the incumbent party or leader without any further consideration.

Although safety nets are considered laudable, but the failure in Nigeria conform to a pattern, which is invariably an extension of the hegemonic culture of the ruling class, whereby public and social policies were formulated in accordance with the parochial political interests of the elites, often at a great expense to the Nigeria project. Social safety nets stand a lot of serious political risks, Nigeria should aware of the political terrain in which they are receiving support. Many of these social protections are susceptible to political influence. Notably, social nets initiated by one politician or political party can become closely associated with that leader jeopardize political support for the programme from other politicians or parties.

Consequences of shifting the Motives of Social Safety Nets

According to Stokes (2007) Political clientelism is problematic for two main reasons. First, because patronage can undermine democratic processes enabling elites to secure the political support of the poor who are likely to be willing to sell their votes at a lower price- while ignoring their interests. Second, because social safety nets benefits delivered as patronage would be distributed based on the political importance of would-be recipients, rather than their needs, likely undermining the objectives of the programme.

Vande Walle (2007) argued that political parties may reward or punish a whole community based on aggregate votes within a particular district. Many a times, candidates’ promises and distribution of resources may be seen as a gift of munificence. Realistically, Nigerians, especially the illiterates have interpreted the distribution of social benefits as highly connected with political support.

Besides, the act of manipulating social safety nets to satisfy political benefit in Nigeria can deprive electorates of understanding the exact plans, programmes of a particular leader.

Owing to the fact that, social benefits are distributed on party's platform and not as social protection supported by World Bank. Many of these politicians are tagged with the social safety nets distributed under their administrations such as 'beta don come', owo Arugbo', 'Oko Arugbo' without other programmes that can improve social well-being of the citizens. This, no doubt, undermines the capability of Nigerians to hold politicians to account for the success or failure in delivering on their promises because there are no available clear-cut party's programmes except free money being distributed.

It is not an overstatement that electorates will be perpetually kept in 'dark' politically. This is not uncommon when voters pray for continuity of a particular leader or party because of free money being transferred to them monthly. In this circumstance, voters are blindfolded and dogmatic, not even ready to listen or accept other political parties unless they distribute money.

Using safety nets for political clientelism reduces the credibility of Nigerian electoral processes and trust reposed on our leaders by World Bank, International Organisation, non-governmental organisation or corporate bodies in a way, safety nets as mechanisms for inducing electorates water-down the efforts of Independent National Electoral Commission to conduct just, free and fair election because voters are no longer cast their votes based on interest, conscience or credibility of candidates. Besides, government may no longer find it easy to get aides, grants or support from International Organizations because of insincerity of purpose as most of the grants received by government to cater for social protection were diverted easily because of lack of strict monitoring or adequate feed-back mechanism.

Moreover, there is tendency of poor governance, especially when citizens longer know what is rightfully belong to them as welfare service delivery from the government, then they loose trust and interest in the leadership. In effect, the purposes of establishing safety net programmes remain unfulfilled. Poverty will continue to prevail and that increases the numbers of vulnerable in the society. In the other way, politicians have more opportunities of impoverish the citizens and enlarge their political coast.

Challenges of Safety Net Programmes in a Politicized Nigerian State

Indeed, safety net programmes are confronted by plethora of problems in Nigeria, for instance the process of selecting beneficiaries is perceived as unclear and unfair. There are tendencies of political influence or involvement on how information get to people concerning social safety nets. Many were registered by their political leaders and this deprived the real poor or vulnerable from being captured in the programmes. Actually, the programme failed from inception due to lack of community participation in identification of beneficiaries. Given that Nigeria is strongly committed to Social Safety Nets, however a toxic combination of fiscal resources constraints, conflicting political interest, sectarian (religions) interests, and terrorists threats to national security by insurgents undermined social development. In this chequered context, social safety net programmes cannot evidently thrive. Besides, the issue of 'false starts' in the formulation stages of many public policies in Nigeria extended to social safety nets rendered the scheme unfulfilled. Gboyega (2011) argued that the political class were more interested in amassing power and furthering their economic interests through safety nets other than implementation.

Institutional risk of social safety nets is in finding an appropriate institutional home for the programmes and a regular, predictable financing source. Social safety nets in Nigeria are sometimes introduced by a particular political leader and housed outside the normal bureaucratic structures. The programme then enjoys advantages that enable it to be more efficient and than a regular government programme, it sometimes does so at the potential risk of political sustainability (Adesina, 2014). However, this issue is compounded by the challenge of fragmentation in the implementation mechanism due to lack of clear government structure. Fragmentation of social programmes coupled with the absence of clear governance structure is a common challenge for safety nets administration in Nigeria. Institutionalising, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms seem not effective and efficient in the administration of social safety nets. This lapse create avenue for corrupt practices of the officials saddled with the responsibilities of the programmes.

Human relations of the official of safety nets needs to be monitored and corrected, many a times beneficiaries will approach them for guides but reply with annoyance and embarrassment. Owing to the fact that beneficiaries are receiving free money which of course is their entitlement, the officials would not even consider the level of literacy of their clients but expose them to unwarranted humiliation. This causes a lot of discouragement and living the beneficiaries with option of opting out of the programme. More so, the grievance redress officers are a times inefficient in the areas of settling domestic violence, impersonation, corrupt practices which deserve being reported to appropriate quarters for permanent solution.

Recommendations

Building the credibility of social safety nets by showing that accountable, transparent and fair and that it has prospective development impact on poverty alleviation, the followings are recommended. Indeed, safety net programmes may be adopted or expanded to strengthen electoral support but indiscriminate and desperate agitation for falsehood and insincerity for programme expansion may be inimical to the motives of social safety nets. Politicians in Nigeria need to be checked. The idea of requesting for list of beneficiaries for campaign purposes needs to be stopped. There should distinct separation of government policies from social safety nets programmes that are co-sponsored by World Banks, non-governmental organisation and corporate bodies designed to alleviate poverty.

There is need for all levels of governments (federal, states and local government) to build proper governance structures for the implementation of social safety nets to solve the problem fragmentation and lack of clear governance mechanisms. Separate Ministry needs to be established with supervising Minster to look after the implementation of social protection programmes to avoid bureaucratic bottleneck. Imperatively, a new cadre of highly trained bureaucrats with the expertise, experience, and knowledge to administer social safety net programmes across all levels and sorely required.

Notably, Nigeria social protection and its flaws demand establishment of a robust legal and institutional framework that will guarantee efficiency and sustainability. The government must institutionalised programmes, making them legal binding on successive government.

Undoubtedly, this would put a stop to the current staggered and unsustainable nature of social protection programmes like safety nets.

Lastly, the general public in Nigeria is largely unaware of the social safety net programmes and people are often very sceptical and distrustful of the government's efforts in alleviating poverty through these programmes. There is need to create awareness and sensitization programme via media, National Orientation Agencies to educate citizens (vulnerable) about programmes like safety nets. Besides, beneficiaries must be recognized as stakeholders and not simply recipients of benefits.

Conclusion

Political Clientelism is antithetical to the prospects of social safety net in Nigeria, designed to ameliorate and build economic sustainability of Nigerian nation. Although, it has been confirmed that social safety net programmes advance electoral benefits to the politicians but could as well be to the detriment of vulnerable citizens if not properly monitored as it is capable of eroding the moral capacity of good conscience and distorting the interest of electorates. Hence, awareness and sensitization of general public are desired to educate them on the purposes of safety nets, while restructuring the programmes for better delivery of dividends, the institutionalization of legal frameworks is urgently required for efficient and effective implementation of the programmes.

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