Poverty Reduction Strategies in Mozambique

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Abstract: The principal objective of this article was to analyze qualitatively the reasons for the failure of various strategies to alleviate poverty implemented in Mozambique and the Zambezia Province was used as case study. The study first examined issues of poverty in Mozambique attributing it to lack of basic components of life such as income, employment, high rate of illiteracy, poor infrastructure, mismanagement of public funds, poor governance, political instability, instability of the governments and its programs. This study adopted the interpretative qualitative paradigm because the philosophy guiding this research sought to understand the phenomena being studied, poverty reduction strategies through the participants own experiences, views and suggestions. A combination of methods that are documentary analysis, interviews and focus group discussions was used to generate data and provide the desired trustworthiness and triangulation of data sources. The study found that the anti-poverty programs are well designed but do not reach their target groups for various reasons that are corruption, poor governance and the inability of local authorities to implement the programs. The study recommends that poverty reduction programs must have more involvement of all stakeholders such as local community, NGOs and sectors of civil society in order to experience successful implementations.

Relative poverty: is the condition in which people lack the minimum amount of income needed in order to maintain the average standard of living in the society in which they live. Relative poverty is considered the easiest way to measure the level of poverty in an individual country. Relative poverty is defined relative to the members of a society and, therefore, differs across countries. People are said to be impoverished if they cannot keep up with standard of living as determined by society.

The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite statistic of life expectancy, education, and per capita income indicators, which is used to rank countries into four tiers of human development.

Poverty: As will defined elsewhere, is a state where an individual is not able to cater adequately for his or her basic needs of food, clothing and shelter; is unable to meet social and economic obligations, lacks gainful employment, skills for self-reliance, assets and self-esteem; and has limited access to social and economic infrastructure such as education, health, portable water, and sanitation; and consequently, has limited chance of advancing his or her welfare to the limit of his or her capabilities.

Poverty reduction: The act or process geared towards lowering the rate and prevalence of poverty in the country.

PRSP: Poverty reduction strategies paper is a position paper prepared by the member countries through a participatory process involving domestic stakeholders as well as the development partners, including the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

Introduction

African countries have now become increasingly aware of the importance of implementing strategies that are based on the aspirations of people if poverty is to be significantly reduced. Therefore,
successful strategies to reduce poverty in Mozambique require poor people ownership and support from the country leadership if the strategies are to succeed.

Poverty is a state where an individual is not able to cater adequately for his or her basic needs of food, clothing and shelter; being unable to meet social and economic obligations. It means lack of gainful employment, skills for self-reliance, assets and self-esteem and having limited access to social and economic infrastructure such as education, health, portable water, and sanitation; and consequently, has limited chance of advancing his or her welfare to the limit of his or her capabilities (Betiang, 2010:2).

Poverty reduction means all formal activities geared towards lowering the rate and prevalence of poverty in the country. Poverty reduction strategies are a position introduced in many countries by the World Bank that is a development plan borne out of collaborative efforts of a broad range of stakeholders in poverty reduction. It is normally designed and implemented through the participation of all involved in one way or the other in poverty reduction and in other related issues (Royemomi, 2013:26).

Therefore, the fight against poverty eradication continues to be the primary objective for development as reflected in the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals which set the target of halving global extreme poverty by 2015. Globally, the number of people in absolute poverty has been in decline for about 25 years, yet in Africa it is still increasing. The challenge of poverty reduction in Africa is of a different order from that of elsewhere and will require different strategies.

The total population of Mozambique is estimated at about 23 million inhabitants, 54% of this population is considered poor (INE, 2010). Currently, 70% of the population in Mozambique lives in rural areas and the majority depends on subsistence agriculture (INE, 2010).

The existence of minerals, energy and water resources, the potential for exploitation of agricultural resources, livestock, fisheries and forestry, and for industries installation with multiplier effect in the construction and energy as well as the existence of three major regional trade corridors and transportation puts the country in a privileged position in the region and worldwide. The country has about 36 million of underutilized arable land (only 12% is being grown), with fertile soil under the influence of geological conditions (valleys in plains) and climate (tropical humid predominantly with adequate rainfall) conducive to the practice of agriculture.

Mozambique has not assessed yet whether its resources are in the paradox of a blessing or curse because their operation has not yet reached a large scale. What is known is that the provinces that have the largest deposits in terms of natural resources namely Tete, Zambézia, Nampula and Manica again are those with relatively high rates of poverty in Mozambique. However, the researcher believes that the most important thing to do to reduce poverty is for Mozambique to follow best practices from countries that successfully exploit these resources including Australia, Canada, Norway and Botswana. These countries have successfully improved their economic growth and reduced poverty in the past years.

Statement of the Problem

The incidence of poverty remains very high at over 50% in majority of the country's provinces with Zambézia topping the list with 70.5%. Mozambique has used many strategies in order to reduce poverty. However poverty still remains very high. Therefore the problem being investigated is that despite a number of poverty reduction strategies implemented by Government of Mozambique, the country still experiences extreme poverty especially in Zambézia Province.

Purpose of the Study

The study examined the impact of strategies used to reduce poverty in Mozambique.

Research Questions

The specific research questions that drove the study are:

1- Why do many strategies of poverty reduction fail in Mozambique?
2- What are the changes needed for effectively dealing with poverty reduction in Zambézia Province?

Methodology Design

The researcher used the interpretive research paradigm that is associated with the qualitative research methodology because the research sought to understand the phenomena being studied, poverty reduction strategies through the participants own experiences, views and suggestions. According to Merriam (1998), qualitative methods are more suitable for interpretative or critical perspective investigations.
Qualitative research occupies a recognized place among the various possibilities of studying the phenomena that involve humans and their intricate social relations established in various environments.

In this case study the researcher used qualitative tools to generate data can include questionnaire, interviews, documentation review, and observation. The researcher chose the case study as the basic approach to analyzing the impact of poverty reduction strategies in Mozambique, Zambézia Province that has high level of poverty within real-life situation. The focus of study is to answer how and why type of questions. In addition to that the researcher has manipulated the behavior of the participants in the study (Yin, 2003). Adopting the case study in this research helped the researcher to understand details of poverty reduction programs in Mozambique that would be difficult to convey with other methods.

The Population
Despite the fact that population is not very useful in a qualitative research, it is important that the research brings it up as it describes in thick the characteristics of the participants used in this research. A population is the total of all the individuals who have certain characteristics and are of interest to a researcher. The research is a case study of the central province of Mozambique namely Zambézia. Data and information were gathered from selected districts and were used in the evaluation of the impact of poverty reduction strategies used by the Government of Mozambique. Efforts were made to administer questionnaires and interview people across the three regions of Zambézia Province; Upper Zambézia, Central Zambézia and Lower.

Given the constraints of time and resources, three districts were selected in the above three geo-physical zones selected as representative of the most prevalent groups of poor on the Zambézia Province where almost 80 per cent of the people live in rural areas (National Institute of Statistics-INE-Prophecções; 2007-2040).

Data Generating Tools and Procedure
Data generation refers to the theory and methods used by researchers to create data from a sampled data source in a qualitative study. Because the researcher is the main instrument in a qualitative research, the data were gathered by participatory research methods: focus group discussion (FGD), observation, interviews with the NGOs as well as the community.

All data generation activities were conducted by the researcher as the researcher was the main instrument of data generation. This allowed the researcher to handle all the process of generating data. To sum up, the research employed a variety of techniques to obtain the data. This multiple data generation approach provided a triangulation of data sources and this will be discussed in detail in the following section of combining data collection and generation methods brings.

Focus Group Discussion
(Krueger, 1988) defined the focus group as a form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards a service, concept or idea. According to Hay (2003:91) the number of the groups selected to represent the total population depends on a variety of factors in the field, such as research aims, research scale and heterogeneity of the respondents.

However, focus groups rely on interaction within the group based on topics that are supplied by the researcher (Morgan 1977:12). In this study, the researcher moderated focus groups to understand what levels of poverty are within the guiding dimensions and if the government strategies have seemingly worked and not, and the researcher’s interest is to gather opinions of what communities would have hoped in terms of strategies by the government to address poverty.

Each group had 10 people. According to Gibbs (1997:1) the strength per group recommended by several literatures is usually six to ten and some researchers used up to fifteen people. There were no strict rules adopted to select the participants in the group. This study selected the participants purposively based on the research aim and the participant’s experience of being poor. The people attending the FGD were different from those who answered the questionnaire. The people selected were invited to attend the discussion under big tree shadow. They sat together around a table and discussed the issues related to poverty reduction strategies. The researcher gained useful information from the deep-rooted, passionate and heart- to-heart discussion.

Personal Interviews
An interview is called personal when the interviewer asks the questions face-to-face with the Interviewee. An interview is a conversation between two or more people that is the interviewer and the interviewee, where interviewees are questioned by the interviewer to obtain information.

Personal interviews were conducted to Non-Government Organization (NGO) officers to obtain
the information relating to poverty reduction strategies programs in Mozambique and Zambézia Province in particular. These interviews were based on interview guides prepared previously. The interviews were characterized by open-ended questions. In the evening, after the interviews, some notes were made to remember the information obtained during the day. The goal of the interview is to deeply explore the NGO’s point of view on poverty and poverty reduction strategies.

**Document Analysis**

Secondary data refer to information gathered by someone other than the researcher conducting the present study. Secondary data are usually historical, already assembled, and do not require access to respondents or subjects. Many types of information about the social and behavioral world have been collected and are available to the researcher. Some information is in the form of statistical documents (books, reports) that contain numerical information (Research Methods, 2013).

Secondary data - play a vital role in the research process because secondary data, by definition, are existing data, they have the benefit of being readily available. In addition, secondary data are generally far less time consuming than primary data. Secondary data is already available since it was collected for another purpose (other than the current research project). Finally, a list of options for poverty reduction papers have been developed to facilitate alleviation by government and other policy makers during their current and future deliberations of this important issue.

**Data Analysis**

Analysis is the process that researcher uses to reduce data to a story and its interpretation. Data analysis is the process of reducing large amounts of generated data to make sense of them. Data analysis in this study was done immediately after the data had been generated, both while the researcher is still in the field, and later when the researcher is no longer in the field.

The process of analyzing qualitative data varies from one study to another, depending on how the researcher is guided by the research and appropriateness of the techniques for making sense of the data (Kauwachi; 2004: 113). Kauwachi (2004) argues that the purpose of analysis is to interpret and hence, convert the data into a story that describes the phenomenon or the participants’ views using the emic perspective.

This study employed the inductive approach to data analysis. Inductive data analysis is the inverse of the deductive data analysis. Maykut and Morehouse (1994:126) state that in the deductive approach hypotheses are generated prior to beginning the study while the inductive data analysis is, therefore, based on the data itself after being processed. Inductive data analysis follows several steps that are editing, unitizing, categorizing and tabulating (Nasir, 1999:405-406).

**Interpretation**

Data interpretation involves the process of explaining and giving meaning to data that have been already analysed. According to Chisaka (2001), interpretation of data is a way of trying to make sense of data, uncovering what analysis could not do. It also implies an in-depth analysis and trying to read between the lines as a face value interpretation may be superficial. Trying to find out what exactly is in the data, why it is important and what can be learned from it, is what the researcher did with the data obtained. In this study, the researcher connected findings to personal experiences.

**Findings**

**Poverty Reduction Programmes**

If the number of poverty reduction programmes was equal to eradication of poverty then Zambézia would be one of the richest provinces in Mozambique. But there are so many factors that hinder this, no wonder why the study is examining the impact of these poverty reduction programmes. This therefore answer the question on the reasons for the failure of various strategies in Mozambique and the changes needed for effectively dealing with the problems facing the current problems

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) have become a central instrument in development cooperation since their introduction in 1999. They are presented by the Bretton Woods institutions as being comprehensive, results oriented policy frameworks to reduce poverty and they are the basis of the “new aid architecture”, characterised by a strengthened country ownership of the development process (Holvoet and Renard, 2005:75). The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund head the drafting of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) aimed at the countries considered of the group HIPC (heavily indebted poor countries initiative).

Stewart and Wang (2003: 1), says that the PRSPs, had a negligible impact in combating poverty and compares with a structural adjustment program
(SAP) that did not contribute much too macro-
economic policies. Stewart and Wang (2003: 1) 
attribute the failure of these programs to lack of 
ownership of the respective countries and on the 
other hand, the programs had not been designed 
according to the reality of each country.

Social Objectives that influenced the Poverty 
reduction Programmes

Several policy frameworks and programs have been 
launched in the country with a definite poverty 
reduction objective. Different objectives are 
attributed by different people as the objectives that 
influence poverty reduction programs namely;

• To improve food production
• To create employment
• To improve vocational output/productivity
• Governmental social security obligation

Participation in Poverty reduction Programmes

If associations are not consulted when designing 
the poverty reduction programmes nor the 
implementation process then chances that 
individuals would be invited to participate is very 
low. All the participants interviewed confirmed that 
they never participated in the designing of poverty 
reduction programmes neither have they ever been 
called to participate even after it had been put in 
place.

Target Population for Poverty reduction 
Programmes

When designing any poverty reduction programs, 
there is always a target population to which the 
programme is most directed to. When participants 
were asked whom they think this programme is 
directed to, this is what they had to say;

Lurdes Araujo had this to say,

“É muito difícil para uma mulher tomar conta das 
criancas sem recursos depois de divorcio ou 
mesmo pela morte de marido, por isso esses 
programas ajudam muito as viuvas e mulher em 
geral”

Meaning, ‘It is very difficult for a woman to take 
care of children after a divorce or death of husband, 
no wonder why programmes like this help 
especially widows and women in general.’

On the other hand, Antonio Serrote, an old man 
thinks,

“Isso e mais para os jovens que ainda tem energia 
e tempo de fazer tudo para melhorar as suas 
condições”

Meaning, ‘These is more for youth who still have 
the energy and time to improve their conditions’

Mario Alface, a retired veterinarian said

“Muitos dessas programas é para os elites,e nao 
para qualquer pessoa”

Meaning, ‘ Many of these programmes are 
targeted for the elites, they are not for anyone’.

Therefore, the public does not appear to understand 
the beneficiaries of government’s poverty reduction 
programmes. It seems that the target population is 
not adequately participating in the conception 
and/or implementation of poverty reduction 
programs.

Setbacks That Have Hindered the Efficacy of 
Poverty Reduction Programmes by Government 
in the Country

There are two main factors that have hindered the 
efficacy of poverty reduction programmes of the 
government in the country according to the data 
generated in this study namely;

• Political instability,
• Intolerance and inconsistency of 
government policies

These responses reveal that political instability, 
intolerance and inconsistency of government 
policies could be responsible for the inefficiency 
and non-performance of the poverty reduction 
programmes on the people in Mozambique and in 
Zambèzia Province in particular.

Reasons for the Failure of Various Poverty 
Reduction Strategies in Mozambique.

On answering the research question on Reasons for 
the Failure of Various Poverty Reduction Strategies 
in Mozambique, the NGOs and households were 
interviewed to get their perception.

From the NGOs perception

When asked about the reasons for the failure of a 
number of poverty reduction strategies, NGO 2 said 
that:

“As estratégias são bem desenhadas e incorporam 
muitos programas e preocupações de combate à 
pobreza. Mas acontece que há questões de 
implementação e monitorização ou gestão destas 
estratégias por um lado. Por outro lado a sua 
implementação não atinge o grupo alvo. Ouvimos 
todos os dias através de meios de comunicação 
social sobre muitos financiamentos para o 
desenvolvimento rural e criação de micro 
empresas, mas não se reflectem nas comunidades”
Meaning, ‘the strategies are well designed and incorporate many programs and concerns to combat poverty. But it turns out that there are implementation issues and monitoring or management of these strategies on one side. On the other hand its implementation does not meet the target group. We hear every day through media that the government has put aside a lot of funds for rural development, creation of micro businesses but this is not reflected in the communities.’

NGO 1 also said

“Há um déficit de boa governação, responsabilidade e muita corrupção”

Meaning ‘There is a deficit of good governance, accountability and a lot of corruption’

It is interesting to appreciate that the three responses touch aspects of good governance, accountability, corruption and institutional coordination. They also do touch many aspects of both human and financial resources.

From the Households’ Perception

Santos dos Santos: A participant, who is a leader of a local religion said,

“Todos os programas de redução da pobreza são vagos nos objectivos e nos seus resultados dada a forma add-hoc como os programas são desenhados e identificados. Alguns programas são concebidos a falhas logo a partida, visto que os beneficiários já são antecipadamente identificados e estes não são pobres.”

Meaning ‘All poverty reduction programs are vague in scope as a result of weak and ad-hoc nature of their design and identification. Some are conceived to fail right at the start as they were only designed for the benefit of a very few privileged instead of targeting the poor.’

He further explained that,

“Uma das principais questões do fracasso da estratégia anti-pobreza é que não há o desenvolvimento da cadeia de valor da actividade agrícola. De acordo com a participante menciona que cerca de 35% a 40% dos alimentos produzidos na Zambézia apodrecem em campos agrícolas antes da colheita, por falta de estradas de acesso.”

This means ‘One of the main issues of the failure of anti-poverty strategy is that there is no value addition chain development in agricultural activity. According to the same participant, about 35% to 40% of the food produced in Zambézia gets rotten in agricultural fields before the harvest, for lack of access roads.’

Poverty Reduction Strategies

Poverty reduction strategies was one of the emergent themes which answered the question on the changes needed for effectively deal with the problems facing the country.

Changes Needed for Effectively Dealing with the Poverty Problems

NGOs were asked if there are any changes needed to deal with poverty problems effectively and NGO 5 had this to say,

“As políticas, nomeadamente em matéria de descentralização e planeamento participativo deve ser eficaz e honestamente implementadas. Os conselhos comunitários existentes não assumem o seu papel, pois é uma extensão do Governo do Distrito para a base. O Administrador não deve liderar esse conselho. A comunidade deve eleger alguém que pode efetivamente a representar e que conhece os problemas da comunidade.”

Meaning ‘Policies especially concerning decentralization and participatory planning must be effective and honestly implemented. The existing community councils do not assume its role because it is an extension of the District Government to the base. The Administrator should not lead this council. The community should elect someone who can effectively represent and know the community's problems.’

NGO 1 on the other hand commented that,

“Planeamento participativo eficaz ao nível Distrital melhora a situação das zonas rurais. Mas, o desenvolvimento é altamente politizado. É praticamente impossível ver as prioridades das comunidades incluídas nos planos distritais, porque é determinado por funcionários do governo.”

Meaning ‘Effective participatory planning at the District level’ improves the situation of rural areas. But, the development is highly politicized. It is virtually impossible to have their priorities included in district plans, which is still determined by government officials’.

Suggestions for Poverty Reduction Strategies

Manuel Alicete: A geography secondary school teacher said,

“O país tem riqueza suficiente que pode garantir o bem-estar do seu povo. Nós temos um povo forte e potencial para trabalhar a terra e explorar a sua riqueza. O Estado tem de garantir a educação para todos e de qualidade. Tem que promover a educação vocacional que dá o know-how. O Governo está sendo invadida por funcionários que são incapazes de servir as pessoas porque os exames para a sua admissão não são rigorosos. Há muita corrupção. Mesmo os funcionários do estado os seus diplomas universitários não lhes dão
qualquer conhecimento, e são desviante em relação ao seu posto de trabalho”.

This means that ‘the country has enough wealth that ensures the well-being of its people. We have a strong and potential people to work the land and exploit its wealth. The State has to ensure quality education for all. It has to promote Technical and Vocational Education, the know-how. The Government is being invaded by employees who are unable to serve the people because the entrance exams are not rigorous. There is a lot of corruption. Even those employees who are already in offices in the state, their university diplomas do not give them any knowledge as well as being deviant in relation to their place of employment’.

So, he said,

“Para este caso o governo não deve pagar diploma mas o conhecimento. E as pessoas têm de ser colocados em postos de trabalho apropriados após a sua formação”.

This means ‘for this case the government should not pay diploma but knowledge. People have to be placed in appropriate jobs after their training.’

Investment in education creates skills and credentials which facilitate higher productivity that in turn increases the probability of obtaining higher future earnings amongst those who possess them, in comparison with those who do not. In fact there is strong and empirical verifiable positive relationship across most societies between the wages and salaries that people receive at work and the level of education which they have attained.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that the anti-poverty programs are well designed but do not reach their target groups and is negatively influenced largely by lack of education. The study also concludes that poverty reduction strategies fail because of lack of appropriate strategies to give them continuity when new officials come in as well poor governance of public resources and the inability of local authorities to implement the programs. The study recommends that poverty reduction programs must have more involvement of all stakeholders such as local community, NGOs and sectors of civil society in order to experience successful implementations.

References


