

**AN EVALUATION OF TRICYCLE TRANSPORTATION AS A MEANS OF
POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMME IN ALIMOSHO LOCAL
GOVERNMENT AREA OF LAGOS STATE**

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Abstract

This study examines the role of tricycle as a means of Poverty Alleviation Programme in Alimosho Local Government. Tricycle is one of the mode of land transport that has provided job opportunities for youths across Nigeria. Both the Federal, state and private individuals have invested in this means of transportation so as to assist the youth and help reduce crime and rate of social malaise rocking Alimosho local government and its environs. The paper employs primary and secondary sources as interviews were granted to tricycle riders to ascertain their opinions on the programme. The findings show that unlike other means of poverty alleviation programme that had been introduced since independence, tricycle transport is the most dependable and lasting programme that endured overtime.

Keywords: Poverty, Transportation, Tricycle, Economy

Introduction

Nigeria is enormously endowed with human, agricultural, petroleum, natural gas, and massive untapped mineral resources. Unfortunately, Nigeria is grouped as one of the poorest counties at the threshold of the 21st century, and by 2019, Nigeria assumed the status of the poverty capital of the world² when ironically she was ranked among the richest 50 countries in the early 1970s³.

The increasing poverty level in the country necessitated the introduction of Poverty Alleviation Programmes by successive governments in the country. But with declaration of the reduction in the incidence of poverty level from 70% to 50%,⁴ it is important to examine the step taken by government in that direction. Opinions are divided among Nigerian scholars on the effect of Poverty Alleviation Programme in Nigeria. T. O. Aregbesola⁵ was of the opinion that Nigerian government should stop the proposition of motorcycle riding and procurement of three wheeler motorcycles as a way of Alleviating Poverty because they hardly make people rise above poverty; rather they lead to loss of many lives. Despite the steps that the Federal government of Nigeria is taking to alleviate poverty, Aibieyi and Dirisu⁶ observed that all Poverty Alleviation Programme in Nigeria have not been successful due to reoccurrence of similar factors that made the programmes unsuccessful. Owoye⁷ also observed that irrespective of gender, tricycle has been a source of income generation for both the poor and the University graduates. Contributions to tricycle by the scholars above revealed divergent views on its relevance.

In the light of this, this paper is set to examine the significance of tricycle *in* easing the socio-economic challenges of the people in Alimosho. With the banned of motorcycle in some locations in Lagos as a result of road traffic accidents, robberies and so on, there is also the need to complement existing public transport and as well create jobs for people of Alimosho. One way to empower people is by creating employment that can give them income. Using tricycle for commercial transportation is one of the poverty alleviation strategies that the Alimosho local government and private investors had employed overtime.

Theoretical Framework

Poverty has been variously defined by scholars based on their understanding of the concept. Among economists, poverty according to J. Ewetan has been defined as a situation of low income or low consumption⁸. It is said to exist when one or more persons fall short of a level of economic welfare deemed to constitute a reasonable minimum either in some absolute sense or by the standard of a specific society⁹. Poverty refers to lack of physical necessities, assets and income. It must be noted that the poor in most instances are unable to have access to basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, and decent shelter, unable to meet social and economic obligations, they lack skill, gainful employment, have inadequate possession of economic assets and sometimes lack of self-esteem.

According to World Bank Report, poverty is hunger, lack of shelter, being sick and not being able to go to school, not knowing how to read, not being able to speak properly, not

having a job, fear for the future, losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water, powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom.¹⁰ The vast majority of residents in Alimosho fell into these categories hence the need to introduce tricycle to lessen the poverty ratio in the area.

Evolution of Poverty Alleviation Strategies in Nigeria

Since 1960, poverty eradication efforts in Nigeria centered on education, which was seen as the key to economic, technological and intellectual development of the nation. 'Show the light, and the people will find the way'', was, then the slogan of Nigeria's First President, the late Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe. Therefore education programmes were implemented alongside agricultural extension services, which encouraged increased food production.

Successive governments have tried to address some of these issues through the enunciation of poverty related programmes. Whether these programmes have succeeded in either alleviating is still a subject of controversy among scholars Suffice it to say, however, that the first of such programmes called, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) was enunciated in 1979 by Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo.

OFN lasted until Shehu Shagari's government took over in 1979. Shagari (1979- 1983) shared almost the same poverty reduction idea with his predecessor. He came up with his own pet project named the Green Revolution, which also emphasized food production.

It must be stated though that lack of continuity and shift in approach trailed Poverty Alleviation Programmes since the ouster of Shagari from power in 1983.¹¹

Gen. Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993) is known to be one Head of State that introduced numerous poverty alleviation programme. These include the Peoples bank, which sought to provide loans to prospective entrepreneurs on soft terms and without stringent requirements of collaterals. During General Babangida rule, Community Banks also sprouted as adjuncts of the Peoples Bank and as sources of cheap funds for communities and their members. Another programme was the Directorate of Food Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI), which sought to open up rural areas via construction of feeder roads and provision of basic amenities that would turn them into production centers for the national economy. The DFFRI was on offer as the most comprehensive programme on the nation's war against poverty.¹²

Another programme that tried to head-off the scourge of poverty by targeting the agricultural sector was the Nigerian Agricultural Land development Authority (NALDA). The Authority was intended to reduce the prevalence of subsistence agriculture in the country and in its place infuse large scale commercial farming by assisting farmers with inputs and developing land for them to the point of planting, at subsidized rates.

While all these programmes collapsed at one point or the other, nonetheless, at least one of these programmes enunciated by the Babangida regime –the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) –managed to survive for long. It is on record that hundreds of thousands of youths benefited from the NDE scheme through its four-pronged approach that include Vocational

Acquisition Training (673,000), Entrepreneurial (Business) training (373,366), Training for Rural Employment and Training for Labour-Based works programme. In 2000 alone, NDE said that 21,708 youths received training in vocational skills in 36 states of the federation and Abuja, while 5,075 graduated in different trades.¹³ The scheme which has a special arrangement for women said that several of them had been trained on how to process, preserve and package food.

The regime of Late Gen. Sanni Abacha (1993 – 1998) was known as the midwife of the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) in Nigeria's quest for a way out of debilitating poverty, as this was the period that marked Nigeria's relapse into the global bracket of 25 poorest nations. Significantly, FEAP existed for about two years (1998 – 2000) during which it received funding to the tune of N7 billion out of which about N3.3 billion was disbursed as loans to about 21,000 cooperative societies nationwide that were production oriented.¹⁴

As a rider to all Poverty Alleviation Programmes enunciated over the years in Nigeria, it must be recalled that spouses of Heads of State also joined in the fray with novel programmes that not only elevated the status of these First ladies but also focused on issues of poverty, using State funds. Most noticeable were the Better Life for Rural Women heralded by Mrs. Mariam Babangida and Mrs. Mariam Sani Abacha's Family Support Programme (FSP). These programmes also tried to introduce a gender element into anti-poverty programmes, acting on the assumption that women needed special treatment in the light of their immense contributions to the national economy, both as small-scale entrepreneurs and home keepers. Nonetheless, most of these poverty alleviation programmes suffered the same fate as a recent government assessment showed.

Poverty Alleviation Programme since 1999

Since the beginning of the Fourth republic in 1999, the successive administrations had set out poverty as one of its areas of focus. The Olusegun Obasanjo's administration (1999-2007) started by approving the blueprint for the establishment of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) – a central coordination point for all anti-poverty efforts from the local government level to the national level by which schemes were executed with the sole purpose of eradicating absolute poverty. Such schemes already identified include:

- _ Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES),
- _ Rural Infrastructures Development Scheme (RIDS),
- _ Social Welfare Services Scheme (SOWESS) and
- _ Tricycle ¹⁵

Direct and indirect involvement of government in the provision of transportation is well established all over the world. The global economic recession and the fall out of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) between 1987 and 1993 in Nigeria greatly affect the purchasing power of government and the populace to replace existing public transport fleet of buses and taxis.

In order to meet the transport needs of people, motorcycle popularly which is commonly used as means of inter-city transport in the riverine areas of the country surfaced as commercial transport system in most urban areas of the country. And this has come to stay in most West- African states.

Olusegun Obasanjo's administration set up the Presidential Panel on the Rationalization and Harmonization of Poverty Alleviation and Agencies which was headed by Alhaji Ahmed Joda; Presidential Technical Committee on the Review of all Poverty Alleviation Programme headed by Professor Ango Abdullah; and Committees on Youths Policy, Concept of the Youth Empowerment Scheme and the Blueprint for Poverty Eradication Programme headed by Professor A.B. Aborishade. The findings of these presidential panels coalesced in the formation of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in January 2001. This new scheme was structured to integrate four sectorial schemes which, among others include the Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS). The objective of this scheme is to ensure the provision and development of infrastructure needs in the area of transport, energy, water and communication especially in rural areas. The schemes were been broken into four parts: the Rural Transport Programme, The Rural Energy Programme, the Rural Water Programme, and the Rural

Communication Programme. The target of the National Poverty Eradication Programme is to completely wipe out poverty from Nigeria by the year 2010.

Although this deadline has been reached, many Nigerian's are still living below the poverty line. When NAPEP came on stream in January 2001 and embarked on its transport development programmes, it ordered and took delivery of 2,000 units of three-wheeler vehicles (tricycles) called KEKE-NAPEP. These tricycles were allocated to unemployed youths for commercial transportation in all the states of the federation and Federal Capital Territory, in order to empower them economically.

With the externalities of motorcycles such as road traffic accidents, robberies and so on, there is also the need to complement existing public transport and as well create jobs for people of Lagos, about 500 units of auto-rickshaw tricycles was brought in March, 1998 to Lagos state and these was called '*Keke Marwa*' named after the then military governor of Lagos state Colonel Buba Marwa who initiated the use of tricycle as a means of transportation in the Lagos metropolis. ¹⁶ One way to empower people is by creating employment that can give them income. Using *tricycle* for commercial transportation is one of the poverty alleviation strategies that the Government employed through National Poverty Eradication Programme in creating employment for the unemployed. Its usage has spread across over-crowded settlements in major urban centers in Lagos today such as Ajegunle, Oshodi, Ketu, Lagos Island, Alimosho and Agege.

In 2009, NAPEP launched and distributed two thousand units of green color tricycles with the inscription *Keke NAPEP* as a commercial means of transportation. This was to serve as a strategy to convert area boys from idlers to a productive work force. According to NAPEP, the justifications for the distribution of *keke* nationwide include:

- to ensure mass gainful employment for the idle work force;
- to sustain wealth creation;
- to provide affordable mass transit services;
- To provide opportunity for the growth of other ancillary services such as vending, portal water, mobile food canteens, mobile grocery shops, post-delivery, etc.
- to facilitate technical entrepreneurs and related small businesses that will in turn facilitate transfer of technology; and to facilitate other subsidiary businesses such as the sale of tricycle spare parts, operators, mechanics and building of local contents, among others. ¹⁷

It is noteworthy to mention that majority of commuters use buses, tricycles and motorcycles for movement while some use the taxis. The increase in urban population, particularly those residing in smaller settlements away from city centers is the primary

reason why there is demand of the services of motorcycles and tricycles. Some passengers however prefer the tricycle to motorcycle as a result of its relative affordability, availability and safety. In most places in Alimosho, it is such that the city center is congested with business premises while the fringes are occupied by low and medium income earners. Faced with this, commuters are forced to make longer trips on vehicles and trek longer distance of a consecutive estimate of two trips per person. With the above, it is clear that there is impending mobility crisis arising from demand/supply gap. The emergence of various modes of transportation gave rise to tricycles especially in view of its flexibility and the need to cope with socio-economic trends.

Most tricycle brands in Alimosho are motorcycles with side cars, which have the legal capacity of 5 passengers including the driver. Tricycles are a popular mode of public transportation among commuters due to their high accessibility, availability, affordability, and convenience. Being much less expensive in fares than other vehicles, they play an important role in Nigeria's overall transportation system. Tricycles are the most convenient transportation in rural areas especially from the central town to the villages.

Despite the need to popularize the tricycles over the motorcycles, which are characterized by fatal crashes and other forms of vulnerabilities, these three wheel vehicle poses environmental and social challenges such as fine particles emission, noise, absence of paved roads, lack of parks and terminals on designated routes for hitch-free conveyance of passengers.

Alimosho Local Government Area

Alimosho local government is one of the twenty Local Government Areas in Lagos State. Alimosho lies is between Latitudes 60 36/and 38/ and Longitude 30 17/ and 45/. It is bounded in the North by Ifako-Ijaye Local Government, south by Ojo and Amuwo-Odofin Local Government Areas, East by Agege, Ikeja and Oshodi-Isolo Local Government Areas and in the west by Ogun State. The Local Government is the largest metropolitan area in Lagos state with population of about 1,277,714 inhabitants. Although, the actual number of tricycle operators in Lagos state was not known but they can be seen in many parts of fringe settlements such as Ipaja, Ayobo, Ikotun, Ijekun, Iseri-Oshun, Idimu, Egbeda, Aboru, Shasha in the Local Government Area. These settlements are evolving as urban area and as well faced with inadequate transportation facilities enjoyed by other metropolitan areas in the state. The choice of Alimosho thus stems from preliminary investigation which revealed that the Local Government Area has the largest concentration of tricycle operators and numerous low income earners in Lagos state.

Alimosho was established in 1945 and it was under the then western region. Majority of the Yoruba extraction who dominate Alimosho were the Egbados. The area is very rich in culture, prominent amongst which are Oro, Igunnu and Egungun Festivals annually celebrated. Aside the cultural heritages, majority of the inhabitants of the council area are Islamic and Christian faithful. However, Yoruba language is widely spoken in the community

Impact of Tricycle on the Lives of the People

This centers on how income generated by tricycle operators help in taking care of their life challenges and how this income generation indirectly helps in alleviating their poverty. Tricycle operators generate between N7000 to N10, 000 daily on Ipaja Ayobo route.¹⁸ Out of the daily income, government officials and road transport Union collect N1000 daily on the road. It is important to note that tricycle operators generate sufficient money during the rush hours especially in the morning from 7 am to 10 am when commuters were rushing to work and in the evening between 4 P. M in the evening and 9 P. M. in the Night when commuters are returning to their respective homes. It is worthy to emphasize that Alimosho is the biggest local government in Lagos and has over 800,000 inhabitants according to 2006 population census figure. The high House-rent payment in industrial areas, and other areas proximity to the main commercial hub in the state especially in Ikeja and the Lagos Mainland, Lagos Island makes numerous civil servants and others in the formal sector of the economy to choose Alimosho axis as choices of residence due to cheap house rent depending on the areas of choices. This development instigated numerous people to choose the areas as choice of residence. For instance, in Alimosho area, a room and parlor self-Contain costs N250, 000 annually, while a room self is around N150, 000 and N200, 000 depending on the neatness, proximity to the road and strategic location of the house. While in Ikeja, a room and parlor self-contains costs around N800, 000 to N1.2m depending on its condition. This development prompt mass exodus of people to Alimosho area where rent and price of commodities are relatively moderate.

Tricycle operators are faced with several financial situations which must be fulfilled monthly. These include house rent, electricity bills; children school fees, medical bills, feeding and clothing. Apart from the domestic bills, tricycle operators also purchase fuel and oil, repair and servicing of tricycles, washing and other miscellaneous spending. It is worthy to note that the high extortion by government agency and traffic officials on the road affect the operations on the roads and this hinders them from meeting up with daily expenses. In the rush hours, there is always severe traffic on Alimosho route, and this indirectly limits the number of time that operators would have used. According to Jimoh

Ademola, he said sometimes if the road is free, within one hour, he would go three times, but in the morning and evening when traffic has gather momentum, sometimes, only one round in two hours.¹⁹ This development seriously affects the income of tricycle operators.

It is important to note that tricycle operators faced numerous financial challenges as some of them could not meet up with daily financial demands. Apart from this, some of the tricycle operators also procured it on higher purchase and were unable to fulfill their debt. In situation where they fail to meet up with payment procedures, the donors often forcefully retrieved it from them without refunding the money paid.

Most of the tricycle operators were also graduates who were forced by the exigencies of living an independent life and catering for their immediate families. This is couple with the problem of unemployment rocking the country. According to the chairman, tricycle riders in Iyana Ipaja, Alhaji Faruq Adekola “apart from the fact that some of the tricycle operators were graduates who see tricycle operator as only way to carve a niche, we also employ graduates in our offices across the state. Presently here I have four graduates as staff working in different departments”²⁰

The rush to earn more money triggered Tricycle operators to embark on overloading. Overloading was a major problem in this study. This is not peculiar to this mode of transport alone in Nigeria. Other modes have been found to carry more than stipulated passengers/weight in developing countries particularly in Nigeria²¹. The implications of overloading are grievous; it affects the maneuvering of the vehicle and at the same time increases wear and tear of the vehicle. This has repercussion on the safety of the vehicle and its occupants.

Just over half of the tricycles in Alimosho are registered. Some of the operators who had not registered complained of escalating price of registration and lack of time because several hours would have to be devoted to it due to high level of bureaucracy involved. It follows, therefore, that some of the vehicles may not be road worthy. The implication is that such vehicles are liable to frequent breakdown (with its attendant economic loss to both operators and passengers) and are vulnerable to road crashes. Possession of driving license and year of driving experience are important components of road safety. With only few operators having driver’s license and a high percentage of them had only driven in the last 3 years, it is obvious that it will have significant influence on their driving behavior and safety on the road. Some of the operators may not have gone through the required process of obtaining a license.

Challenges Faced by Tricycle Operators in Alimosho

Tricycle operators faced numerous challenges in the acquisition and operation on the road. One fundamental problem is faced in the bid to acquire tricycle and in their course of operation. These challenges include cost of procuring the tricycle, routes of operation, size of the tricycle, parking problem and problem involving other road users. There were also problem with Tricycle Associations, and the traffic control agencies of government including the police that have become highly extortionists on the road.

Costs of obtaining the Tricycle is a major challenge faced by operators. They were of the opinion that the cost of acquiring a tricycle is enormous. They liken the cost of acquiring an auto-rickshaw to buying a fairly used car. Mathew Adewale,²² a tricycle operator expressed dissatisfaction with the way and process involved in the acquisition of it. "Before I could acquire my own, I had to plead and bribe my way before I was given one despite the fact that I have my money to pay. This is probably because only very few were available then and it was given to the highest bidder."²³ Sunday Ideye, a graduate of political science from Nasarawa State University also expressed similar opinion. He maintained that the cost of obtaining Keke Marua is too high, and blame the hike on the volatility of the Naira and the high exchange rate of dollars.²⁴ The operators explained that the tricycles were given by Microfinance Bank on hire purchase at an average price of N 1,300,000 and registration which cost between N 80,000 to N 85,000. The total of which is equivalent to N 1,400,000.²⁵

It was revealed that NAPEP was to encourage operators to purchase through initiative of Peace Tolerance and Training (IPET), one of its various scheme. IPET procure and sold the tricycle at a unit price of N 330,000 (600USD) in 2014 and operators paid into two different accounts, N295,000 (590 USD) is to be paid into IPET account and N 35,000 was to be paid as commission.²⁶

Ironically, In 2015, NAPEP sold to individual that has the capability to buy the tricycles in fleet at the rate of N 330,000 (600USD) and these individuals sold to Micro-finance Bank at the rate of N350, 000 (700 USD), the bank later sold to tricycle operators at the rate of N 550,000 (1.100USD) in hire purchase and this put additional financial costs of N200, 000 (400USD) to the purchase of the tricycle. The operators explained that the actions of NAPEP officials make it difficult to acquire the tricycle at the official price, thereby, questioned the credibility of the programme.²⁷ Michael Olatunde also corroborated the challenges of the tricycle operators in the acquisition of the tricycle but blamed it on Naira volatility.²⁸ When we purchase one tricycle from Indian manufacturer at the rate of N300, 000, sometimes at the rate of N200 Per dollar, and suddenly exchange rate rises to N350 per dollar. We need to increase the cost to meet up with the present cost

of dollar so that we will be able to buy next time. The instability in the currency exchange also affects the supply. Apart from this, tricycle operators also find it difficult to give out Keke on higher purchase to assist people because of the instability in the exchange rate.

Route Choice, Size of Tricycle and Parking Facilities are another challenge facing tricycle operator. They also faced the challenges of route choice, the size of tricycle and the problem of parking. In Lagos and especially Alimosho, tricycle operators were restricted to some particular routes to navigate. This is due to the demands of the laws of Lagos that restricted them to certain area. Operators were of the opinion that in many a time, they often ply the route that is economical in order to meet up with the payment of the tricycle. Due to unspecified route, and with the size of the tricycle, they have to share road ways with trucks and other vehicles and this make the operators and passengers vulnerable to road traffic accident. The operators in the study area also lament that, because of uncoordinated tricycle riders association, they lack parks of garages, and many of the operators use roadside as park. According to Mr. Wasiu Oguntola,²⁹ he expressed fear on the way in manner in which trailers and long trucks often chased them away from the road. Some of these truck owners see us as threat on the road because we share the same road. Sometimes they drive carelessly and if accidentally there is break failure, the extents of damage caused by the truck on our keke is very disturbing and also lead to loss of lives. This has created fear in the minds of commuters in such that they prefer taking commercial buses. It is important to note that tricycle carries five passengers including the driver, and this makes it faster for passengers to get to their destinations. Also, in the case of traffic, tricycle size is very small and can easily navigate small space. Apart from this, it is very open in such that people prefer it to commercial bus because of access to air. While there is contamination of air in commercial buses, the open nature of tricycle makes it open to fresh air.³⁰ All these advantages were under serious threat as a result of the serious infraction created by truck drivers on the road. Hence despite all the analyzed benefit of tricycle, its vulnerability scared people from boarding it on like before.

There is also the problem of parking facilities. Tricycle operators do not have specific areas where they can park in Alimosho; they parked on a side of the roads thus obstructing free flow of traffic. Some also parked at filling stations to load passengers and this sometimes leads to crisis with the management.

An interesting challenge faced by tricycle operator comes from security and traffic agencies in Lagos state. The demand for bribes and kickbacks from tricycle operators is too alarming in the state and this often generate crisis between the operators and security agencies. In areas of registration, the Vehicle Inspection Officers (VIO) overcharged the operators and this sometimes leads to crisis. Policemen sometimes arrest them and

demand for bribes. For instance Policemen were bribed N5000 every day to allow unrestricted operation of the tricycle operators in Alimosho park. Apart from the police, the men of LASTMA and other traffic warden also designed ways of exploiting them.³¹ This exploitation is too unbearable to them and it lead to violence and protests

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study has examined the socio-economic impact of tricycle in Alimosho local government area. Findings show that there was an improvement in the welfare of tricycle operators who were involved in the scheme. In spite of the benefits of the scheme, many problems were highlighted by tricycle operators. These problems include (i) high cost of acquiring the tricycle with short term payback period, (ii) problems associated with parking, (iii) continual extortion from the police and local government officials and (iv) conflict with other road users which often results to road traffic accidents. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

- (i) Government should create a way by which beneficiaries of the scheme will obtain the loan directly and payback period be reviewed.
- (ii) Adequate parking provision should be made for tricycle operators in various parks where they operate.
- (iii) Mechanism should be put in place to curb the police and local government officials in extorting the tricycle operators.
- (iv) Enlighten other road users in accommodating tricycle operators on Lagos roads.

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