Summary

The programme was designed to bring together all stakeholders in the affairs of the city of Ijebu-Ode to collectively appreciate the problem of poverty in the city, collectively look into how to solve the problems of the city regarding poverty using the available human, material and natural resources. The programme to date has succeeded in mobilizing about US$180,000 local funds which the Ijebu-Ode Development Board is using to establish people in vocations after adequate training to help them improve on their income earnings. To date, 12 people have been set up as poultry farmers, 17 as pineapple growers and 10 as bee keepers. In addition, the programme has trained a total of 1,115 participants in various enterprises including bee keeping, pineapple production, cassava processing, poultry keeping, and business management and Book Keeping. 277 market women and men have been given loans to trade or invest in their enterprises. The programme has succeeded in reforming the system of governance in the city authorities as it has brought more openness to city administration.

Narrative

Situation Before the Initiative Began

The city of Ijebu-Ode was faced with a myriad of problems related to poverty similar to all other cities in Nigeria. There was no institution or forum in place to address the issue and efforts were done at the individual level. The situation was created from years of poor national governance and the squandering
of national resources. There was distrust of the local government and citizens did not perform their civic responsibilities as regards tax. There was insecurity and people and businesses migrated out of the city to other towns.

Establishment of Priorities

The DPC and the Urban Management Programme-Regional Office for Africa came up with the city consultation process to tackle the problem. The Ijebu-Ode local Government Council and the Traditional Institution were then brought together to discuss modalities of addressing the problem. After a series of mini-consultations with identified stakeholder groups, people were brought together in the process of the city consultation. They all brainstormed on the problem and possible solutions. The outcome of their deliberations were packaged in what is called the Action Plan for tackling poverty in the city which in the main contain the following:

1. Developing a number of enterprises to generate income and employment. Some of these enterprises included animal and crop production, food processing and forest based enterprises.

2. Improving the infrastructural base of the city. This includes constructing and rehabilitating roads, water supply and health institutions.

3. Building the capacity of the people to reduce poverty in the city.

4. Developing tourism, arts and craft in the city.

5. Enlisting the support of private sector enterprises, NGOs/CBOs as well as government and donor agencies to assist in the implementation of the contents of the action plan.

Formulation of Objectives and Strategies

After the formulation of an action plan, the first problem encountered was how to implement them. The institution best suited to implement this was the Local Government but the community would have nothing to do with it because of their past records of inaction and corruption. The community then evolved a new institution that engaged all stakeholders. The next thing was to write an appropriate document to distribute tasks and responsibilities. This was also successfully done by the institution empowered by the people to manage the process. There was also the need to set up a secretariat to work which the traditional institution graciously donated and the community acquired furniture and personnel employed to manage the secretariat. The entire city was gathered at the inauguration of the Board where they were given their terms of reference.

Mobilization of Resources

From the onset, the plan was to mobilize funds from the people, State and Local Government and the Donor Community. The DPC and the UMP tried to organise a Donors Round table Meeting of multilateral and bilateral agencies with the stakeholders and the Local Government to mobilize funds and support for the Ijebu-Ode project. This support was co-ordinated by the UNDP office in Nigeria. The roundtable did not take off as technical hitches and apparent donor fatigue stalled the programme. Undaunted, the people of Ijebu-Ode decide to launch the action plan and use the opportunity to mobilize funds from well to do family members and friends. The programme was held on March 25, 2000 and N10 million (US$100,000) was realised. The funds were to be used in empowering the people economically in the area of micro-credit and enterprise development. Since then, an additional amount of N 961,420 (US$9,614.20) has been donated to bring the total to N 10,961,420 (US$109,614.20). In addition to financial resources, the 32 members of the Board provide services free of charge to the people. All the Resource Persons used in the training programmes provided their services free. The State government provided free land to the programme. An interesting development about the realisation of the funds is that the traditional ruler called on all household heads in his domain and charged them to contribute to the fund. In addition, he opened what he refers to as his
"book of life" in which all the contributions are documented. Any rich indigene who did not contribute would be asked to go and do so before seeking favour from the traditional ruler.

The Board has also opened a foreign account for Ijebu Indigenes in diaspora to contribute. The Board again decided to raise funds to implement some aspects on health in the action plan. On February 5, 2002, another fund raising exercise patroned by His Royal Majesty was called to rehabilitate the General Hospital. The traditional ruler had intimated the State Governor of the intention of the people in carrying out renovation and infrastructural rehabilitation of the hospital. The State government gave a first installmental payment of N4 million (US$40,000). The total amount raised that day and up to date on the health project is N7,112,550 (US$71,125.50). In addition, an individual volunteered to renovate and equip the male ward of the hospital which will cost N5 million (US$50,000).

Results Achieved

In the area of microcredit, about 987 people applied for the loan. However, only 179 could be given. That is why the loans are short term in nature to benefit a larger number of people. A total N59,220 was realised as interest payment on the loans. To date, 160 have repaid their loan thus a recovery rate of 89.4%. The outstanding loan to be recovered is N59,080 which is just 6% of the total disbursement. The loan payment has been extended by one month. Of the total 179 beneficiaries, only four were men. Another set of loans worth N709,500 has been given out to 98 beneficiaries in ten groups. This is to go round at an average of N7,300 each. The Board is processing the third set of loans totalling N456,000 to another 94 beneficiaries at an average of N4,800 per beneficiary.

In the area of enterprise development, 17 people benefited from the pineapple growing scheme. Each of them was given 2,000 suckers to plant after they were trained on pineapple growing and management. The Board expended N25,525 for each beneficiary to start them off. The loan was given mostly in kind and included the cost of land preparation, provision of suckers and chemicals, planting and weeding costs. For the 17 beneficiaries, the total amount expended on pineapple was N433,925. In the poultry scheme, twelve people benefitted and each beneficiary was provided with a cage, 60 point of lay birds and feeding and medication for the first one month. A total of N66,037.50 was expended on each participant. This amounted to a total of N 792,450.00. There were also 10 beneficiaries in the bee keeping programme. The total cost per participant was N36,826, which adds up to a total of N368,260. A total of 1115 participants have also been trained in different areas of enterprise and business management.

Sustainability

The Ijebu-Ode Poverty Reduction Programme is already a success story. The achievements of the programme can be seen from the number of beneficiaries and the fact that the people have taken ownership of the programme that they did not wait for donor support. They have succeeded in demonstrating what they can do with external assistance using their own local resources. The programme has had catalytic effect on poverty reduction in the city. In the setting up of enterprises described above, the Board made sure that they patronized the local artisans. Cages for the poultry farmers were fabricated by artisans in the town just as materials for the bee keepers were similarly procured. The feed for the poultry birds were purchased from producers in the town whose enterprises were becoming moribund. Consequently, the programme has helped to ginger economic activities in the town. More efforts are been put in the direction of improving the business environment in the town to enable the people earn more income to meet their household needs.

In the area of governance, the programme has also achieved greatly. For the first time in the history of governance in Nigeria, the Ijebu-Ode Local Government that has statutory authority to manage the city of Ijebu-Ode submitted its year 2001 budget to the people through the Board to read and make input into the budget before it is passed by the local government council. It did the same in year 2002. The cordial relationship between the people and the local government authorities was demonstrated when in year 2001 the local government authority wanted to rehabilitate a township road that passed by the neighbourhood of the rich elites. The people asked the local government to suspend that and
rehabilitate the road which linked the commercial nerve centre of the city. The local government obliged. In turn, the people commenced the payment of income tax which they stopped more than a decade before. The local government in spite of its dwindling financial resources have been implementing some of the infrastructural aspects of the action plan by providing three boreholes in addition to rehabilitating malfunctioning ones to provide water to the people. These achievements notwithstanding, the Board is faced with a number of problems which borders more on resource availability. About half of the proceeds realised on poverty reduction was fixed so that it interest payments on the fixed money can be used to pay the wages of the staff working on the Board. These include the Administrative Manager, Project Coordinator, Office Assistant and an Accounts Clerk. Their total monthly wages and the cost of stationnaries is N60,000 (US$600). This is the reason little can be given to beneficiaries. One must be mindful of the fact that most of members of the Board are fairly old and retired from wage income. They render services free of charge. They also have that social responsibility of ensuring the programme continues in perpetuity as its failure could earn them societal sanctions in the city. When the actual beneficiaries are compared with the intended beneficiaries in the action plan, it is clear that current success are like a drop in an ocean. For example, while programme set out to establish 100 poultry farmers, 200 pineapple growers and 30 individual bee keepers in the first three years of the programme. Till date only 12 poultry farmers, 17 pineapple growers and 10 beekeepers have been established. Nothing has been done in the area of snailry, rabbitry, fish farming, charcoal and cassava processing. These are areas where jobs can be created to solve the problem of unemployment in the city.

Transferability

In addition, the programme is already been replicated. While the DPC is already replicating the poverty reduction programme through city consultation in the northern city of Minna, two cities, Ado-Ekiti and Oligun have sent representatives (two from Oligun and three from Ado-Ekiti) to understudy the Ijebu-Ode programme. They were trained free by the Board. In addition, the programme has received recognition from unternational agencies. USAID invited the Chairman of the Board in year 2001 to present a paper on Conflict Resolution in a workshop in Lagos while on April 22, the Chairman of Project Implementation Committee will be in Cairo, Egypt at the invitation of Netherlands Development Assistance Research Council (RAWOO) to share the Ijebu-Ode experience in a workshop.

Key Dates

April 22-24, 1999: The holding of the city consultation that changed the face of community approach to solving poverty through the efforts of the people.

July 29, 1999: Inauguration of the Ijebu-Ode Development Board on Poverty Reduction. The Board which was a deviation from the norm in managing the city affair came into being blending the traditional authority with the statutory authority to work together with the people they are supposed to serve.

March 25, 2000: Launching of the Action Plan and Fund Raising that netted the Board US$100,00, on the spot.

February 5, 2002: Another launching that yielded US$70,000 and which was meant to rehabilitate the city\'92s General Hospital.

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