THE IMPACT OF THE N-POWER PROGRAMME ON POVERTY REDUCTION IN BAUCHI STATE, NIGERIA

Kaburuk Paul Daniel
Department of Sustainable Procurement, Environment and Social Standards Enhancement Centre of Excellence (SPESSCE)
Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi, Nigeria
Phone Number
0806 096 2299
kpdaniel.pg@atbu.edu.ng

Salisu Abdullahi
Department of Agricultural Economics
Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi, Nigeria
Phone number
08035750805
Saabdullahi@atbu.edu.ng

Abstract
This study examined the impact of the N-Power Programme on poverty reduction among youths in Bauchi State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to: assess the programme's effect on skills acquisition and income improvement; evaluate its contribution to livelihood sustainability; and identify implementation challenges affecting its effectiveness. The study was anchored on social investment and social contract theories. A descriptive survey research design was employed, with primary data collected from 352 N-Power beneficiaries selected through a multi-stage sampling technique comprising purposive, stratified, and simple random sampling from four local government areas. Instrument validity was established through expert review, and reliability yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87. Findings revealed that N-Power contributed positively to poverty reduction through enhanced technical skills (mean = 3.24, SD = 0.67), improved household income (mean = 3.13, SD = 0.75), and better living standards (mean = 3.14, SD = 0.77). Participation was highest in N-Power Teach (83.8%). Significant challenges included irregular stipend payments (mean = 3.29, SD = 0.68), corruption (mean = 3.08, SD = 0.79), and weak post-exit support (mean = 2.81, SD = 0.85). A Spearman's correlation confirmed a significant positive relationship between participation duration and income improvement (rho = 0.412, $p < 0.05$). The study concludes that while N-Power has generated short-term poverty reduction gains, its long-term effectiveness depends on addressing governance deficits and strengthening transition mechanisms. Recommendations include automated stipend payment systems, expanded N-Exit partnerships with the private sector, and enhanced monitoring frameworks.

Keywords: N-Power Programme; Poverty Reduction; Youth Empowerment; Social Investment; Bauchi State

Introduction
Poverty remains one of the most enduring development challenges globally, with young people disproportionately affected. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2023) estimates that approximately 65 million youth aged 15–24 are unemployed worldwide, with many more engaged in vulnerable employment characterised by low wages, job insecurity, and absence of

social protection. In developing regions, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, the situation is more acute. The World Bank (2022) reports that nearly 40% of youth in Sub-Saharan Africa are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET), representing a significant drain on human capital and economic productivity. Countries such as India, South Africa, and Brazil have implemented large-scale youth employment programmes with varying degrees of success, highlighting the importance of programme design, institutional capacity, and contextual alignment (Banerjee, Duflo, & Hornbeck, 2014; Bassi & Nansamba, 2022).

Nigeria, notwithstanding the country's substantial endowment of human and natural resources, continues to experience widespread multidimensional deprivation, reflected in low-income levels, limited access to quality education and healthcare, and poor living standards (Olowa, 2012; Alkire, Kanagaratnam, & Suppa, 2018; World Bank, 2022). These deprivations extend beyond material poverty to include structural and institutional constraints that limit individual capabilities (Dauda, 2016; Iheonu & Urama, 2019).

Youth poverty constitutes a particularly critical dimension of Nigeria's development challenge. Young people are disproportionately affected by unemployment and underemployment, which undermines their ability to secure sustainable livelihoods (Kayode, Arome, & Anyio, 2014; ILO, 2012; Surajo & Karim, 2016). Persistent youth unemployment has also been associated with broader socio-political challenges, including insecurity, social exclusion, and declining trust in public institutions (Nwagwu, 2014; Onyeiwu, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the implementation of numerous poverty alleviation and youth empowerment initiatives by successive Nigerian governments including the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), and the Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YOU-WIN) poverty and youth unemployment have remained pervasive, especially in northern Nigeria. The primary reasons include weak institutional capacity, ineffective targeting, corruption, and policy discontinuity (Taiwo & Agwu, 2016; Onah & Olise, 2019; Onyeiwu, 2021).

In Bauchi State, where poverty incidence and youth unemployment remain critically high (Global Data Lab, 2022; Bauchi State Government, 2023), the N-Power Programme has been widely implemented. However, empirical evidence on its actual impact at sub-national levels remains mixed and largely undocumented. Specifically, there is a lack of systematic research examining: (a) the programme's effect on skills acquisition and income improvement among beneficiaries; (b) the sustainability of livelihood outcomes post-programme exits; and (c) the institutional and governance challenges that mediate programme effectiveness. This study addresses these gaps.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- What is the effect of the N-Power Programme on skills acquisition and productivity among beneficiaries in Bauchi State?

- To what extent has the N-Power Programme contributed to income improvement and enhanced living standards of beneficiaries?
- What are the major implementation and sustainability challenges affecting the N-Power Programme in Bauchi State?
- How effective is the N-Exit scheme in supporting post-programme transition for beneficiaries?

Research Objectives

The general objective of this study was to examine the impact of the N-Power Programme on poverty reduction among youths in Bauchi State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

- Assess the effect of the N-Power Programme on skills acquisition and productivity of beneficiaries.
- Determine the extent to which the programme has contributed to income improvement and enhanced living standards.
- Identify the implementation and sustainability challenges constraining programme effectiveness.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the N-Exit scheme in supporting post-programme livelihood transition.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it provides empirical evidence on the effectiveness of a major social investment programme at the sub-national level, filling a critical gap in the literature. Second, the findings will inform policy makers and programme implementers about specific governance and operational challenges requiring attention. Third, the study contributes to theoretical debates on social investment and social contract in developing country contexts. Fourth, beneficiaries and prospective applicants will gain insights into programme strengths and limitations. Finally, the study provides a methodological template for evaluating similar youth empowerment interventions in other Nigerian states and across Sub-Saharan Africa.

Literature Review

Several studies have examined the N-Power Programme across different Nigerian states. Akujuru and Enyioko (2019) investigated the programme's impact in Rivers State and found positive contributions to poverty alleviation, particularly through income support and skill development. However, they noted significant challenges including stipend delays and inadequate post-programme transition support.

Nwaobi (2019) examined the effect of N-Power on youth unemployment duration using SSRN data and found that programme participation contributed to reductions in unemployment spells. The study recommended stronger linkage between training content and labour market demands.

Lamidi and Igbokwe (2021) provided a broad assessment of Nigeria's Social Investment Programmes, arguing that while N-Power represents an innovative policy direction, its effectiveness is undermined by weak institutional coordination, political interference, and absence of robust monitoring and evaluation systems.

Oyewo (2021) evaluated the role of the National Social Investment Programme in poverty reduction and concluded that programme outcomes vary significantly across states depending on local governance quality and implementation capacity. States with stronger institutional frameworks recorded better beneficiary outcomes.

Onah and Olise (2019) examined the NSIP and sustainable poverty reduction nationally, finding modest positive effects on income but limited impact on structural poverty due to programme temporariness and weak exit strategies.

Conceptual Clarification

Poverty reduction: Refers to the multidimensional process of improving income levels, enhancing access to basic services, and building capabilities that enable individuals to escape deprivation (World Bank, 2022). In this study, poverty reduction is operationalised through indicators of household income, living standards, and employability.

Youth empowerment: Denotes the process by which young people gain the ability, authority, and agency to make decisions and implement changes in their own lives and communities (Jennings, Parra-Medina, Hilfinger-Messias, & McLoughlin, 2006). Within the N-Power context, empowerment is measured through skill acquisition, career development, and entrepreneurial capacity.

Social investment: Refers to public policies that focus on building human capital and capabilities rather than passive income transfers (Nolan, 2013). The N-Power Programme is conceptualised as a social investment instrument.

The conceptual relationship posits that: programme participation → skills acquisition → improved employability → income enhancement → poverty reduction. However, this pathway is mediated by governance quality, stipend regularity, and post-exit support mechanisms.

Theoretical framework

This study is anchored on two complementary theoretical frameworks: Social Investment Theory and Social Contract Theory.

Social Investment Theory: (Nolan, 2013; Morel, Palier, & Palme, 2012) conceptualises welfare not merely as income redistribution but as a strategic investment in human capital aimed at enhancing productivity, employability, and long-term welfare outcomes. Unlike traditional welfare models that provide passive support, social investment emphasises active labour market policies, skills training, and education. The theory posits that investments in young people generate cumulative returns for individuals (higher earnings, better employment) and society (reduced welfare dependence, increased tax revenues, social stability). The N-Power Programme embodies this logic by providing structured work placements and sector-specific training. This theory is relevant because it provides the analytical lens for assessing whether programme participation translates into sustainable human capital gains.

Social Contract Theory: (Shaapera, 2012; Rousseau, 1762/1988) frames the relationship between the state and citizens as grounded in reciprocal obligations. The state is expected to provide basic welfare protection and opportunities for socio-economic participation, particularly for vulnerable groups such as youths, while citizens contribute through labour, civic engagement, and social compliance. In modern development discourse, the social contract implies that citizens' compliance with state authority is contingent on the state's provision of tangible benefits and opportunities. The N-Power Programme can be interpreted as an implicit social contract between the Nigerian state and its youth population — the state provides temporary employment and skills training in exchange for service delivery in critical sectors. This theory is relevant because it allows analysis of how governance failures (stipend delays, corruption, politicisation) undermine citizens' trust and the perceived legitimacy of state interventions.

Together, these frameworks provide a robust analytical foundation: Social Investment Theory assesses the human capital outcomes of the programme, while Social Contract Theory evaluates the governance and accountability dimensions.

Empirical Literature Review

Several studies have examined the N-Power Programme across different Nigerian states. Abovu and Chintuwa (2019) investigated the programme's impact in Rivers State and found positive contributions to poverty alleviation, particularly through income support and skill development. However, they noted significant challenges including stipend delays and inadequate post-programme transition support. Godwin (2019) examined the effect of N-Power on youth unemployment duration using MPRA data and found that programme participation reduced unemployment spells by an average of 6-8 months. The study recommended stronger linkage between training content and labour market demands.

Lamidi and Igbokwe (2021) provided a broad assessment of Nigeria's Social Investment Programmes, arguing that while N-Power represents an innovative policy direction, its effectiveness is undermined by weak institutional coordination, political interference, and absence of robust monitoring and evaluation systems. Oyewo (2021) evaluated the role of NSIP in poverty reduction and concluded that programme outcomes vary significantly across states depending on local governance quality and implementation capacity. States with stronger institutional frameworks recorded better beneficiary outcomes. While existing studies recognise the potential of N-Power, they present four key gaps that this study addresses: (1) limited empirical evidence at sub-national levels, particularly in North-East Nigeria; (2) insufficient attention to governance and institutional challenges as mediating variables; (3) weak theoretical grounding; and (4) absence of systematic analysis of post-exit sustainability mechanisms. This study contributes to filling these gaps through a theoretically grounded, empirically rigorous investigation in Bauchi State.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is suitable for examining socio-economic characteristics, programme outcomes, and beneficiaries' perceptions of public policy interventions (Taherdoost, 2016; Sharma, 2017). The design enabled systematic collection of primary data and facilitated analysis of patterns associated with participation in the N-Power Programme. The study was conducted in Bauchi State, located in North-East Nigeria. Bauchi State comprises twenty local government areas and is characterised by a predominantly agrarian economy, limited industrial activity, high youth unemployment, and widespread poverty (Global Data Lab, 2022; Bauchi State Government, 2023).

The population of the study comprised all registered beneficiaries of the N-Power Programme in Bauchi State. According to official records from the Bauchi State NSIP Coordination Office (2024), the total registered beneficiary population was 1,847 as of January 2024. This figure served as the sampling frame. Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table, a sample of 352 respondents was selected from the population of 1,847 to ensure representativeness and statistical reliability at a 95% confidence level.

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed:

- Stage 1 (Purposive Selection): Four Local Government Areas (LGAs) were purposively selected based on high N-Power beneficiary concentration and representativeness of Bauchi State's socio-economic diversity: Bauchi LGA (urban), Tafawa Balewa (semi-urban), Misau (rural-agrarian), and Katagum (rural).
- Stage 2 (Stratified Sampling): Beneficiaries were stratified by programme component (N-Power Teach, Agro, Health, Tech). Proportional allocation was used to determine sample sizes from each stratum based on the population distribution.
- Stage 3 (Simple Random Sampling): Within each stratum, individual respondents were selected using simple random sampling (balloting without replacement) to eliminate selection bias.

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire divided into five sections: (A) socio-economic characteristics; (B) programme participation details; (C) livelihood and income outcomes; (D) sustainability measures; and (E) implementation challenges.

Validity: The questionnaire was face-validated and content-validated by three experts: two from the Department of Sociology, Federal University Wukari, and one from the Bauchi State Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning. Their feedback informed the revision of ambiguous items.

Reliability: A pilot test was conducted with 30 non-sample beneficiaries in a neighbouring LGA not selected for the main study. Reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which yielded an overall value of 0.87, indicating high internal consistency. Sub-scale reliability values ranged from 0.81 to 0.89.

Responses were measured on a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), Strongly Agree (4). A four-point (forced choice) scale was used instead of a five-point scale to avoid the neutral midpoint, which can produce ambivalent or socially desirable responses that obscure genuine perceptions (Taherdoost, 2016). A mean score threshold of 2.50 was adopted as the decision point: mean scores ≥ 2.50 were interpreted as agreement/positive perception; scores <2.50 as disagreement/negative perception.

Data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques:

- Descriptive statistics: Frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations were computed to summarise respondents' characteristics and perceptions.
- Inferential statistics: Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used to test the relationship between programme participation duration and income improvement. A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was adopted for hypothesis testing.

Data were presented using tables for clarity and ease of interpretation.

Results /Presentation of Findings

Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Table 1 presents the socio-economic characteristics of the 352 respondents.

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	212	60.2
	Female	140	39.8
Age Group	18–24 years	98	27.8
	25–30 years	105	29.8
	31–35 years	149	42.3
Marital Status	Married	194	55.1
	Single	158	44.9
Education	Secondary	42	11.9
	NCE/Diploma	97	27.6
	B.Sc./B.Tech	123	35.0
	Postgraduate	90	25.6
Pre-Programme Income	Less than ₦100,000	222	63.1
	₦100,000–₦200,000	88	25.0
	Above ₦200,000	42	11.9
Pre-Programme Employment Status	Unemployed	163	46.3
	Underemployed	115	32.7
	Employed (formal)	74	21.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 reveals that male respondents constituted the majority (60.2%), while females represented 39.8%. This gender imbalance is consistent with broader patterns of male dominance in public employment programmes in northern Nigeria, where socio-cultural factors and mobility constraints tend to limit female participation in structured labour market interventions (Kayode, Arome, & Anyio, 2014). Most respondents (42.3%) were aged 31–35 years, and 55.1% were married. Educational attainment was relatively high, with 35.0% holding B.Sc./B.Tech degrees. Prior to programme participation, 63.1% earned less than ₦100,000 monthly, and 46.3% were unemployed, confirming the programme's relevance as an income and employment support mechanism.

Participation across N-Power Programme Components

Table 2 presents participation across programme components. Respondents could participate in multiple components; therefore, percentages do not sum to 100%.

Table 2: Participation across N-Power Programme Components

Programme Component	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Rank
N-Power Teach	295	83.8	1st
N-Power Agro	276	78.5	2nd
N-Power Health	253	72.0	3rd
N-Power Tech	221	62.8	4th

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Note: Multiple responses allowed; percentages do not sum to 100%.

N-Power Teach recorded the highest participation (83.8%), followed by Agro (78.5%), Health (72.0%), and Tech (62.8%). This distribution reflects sectoral accessibility, local economic structure, and skill availability among youths in Bauchi State.

Contribution of the programme to livelihood improvement

Table 3 presents mean scores and standard deviations for livelihood improvement indicators.

Table 3: Perceived Contribution to Livelihood Improvement

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
The programme enhanced my technical skills	3.24	0.67	Agree
My productivity improved due to programme participation	3.22	0.71	Agree
The programme supported small-scale business establishment	3.01	0.82	Agree
The programme made no visible contribution to my livelihood (R)	1.89	0.74	Disagree

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Scale: 1.00–1.49 = Strongly Disagree; 1.50–2.49 = Disagree; 2.50–3.49 = Agree; 3.50–4.00 = Strongly Agree. (R) = Reverse-coded item.

Standard deviations (0.67–0.82) indicate moderate consensus among respondents. The lowest SD (0.67) for technical skills enhancement suggests the strongest level of agreement on this item, while the higher SD (0.82) for small-scale business establishment reflects more varied perceptions.

Socio-economic impact on beneficiaries

Table 4 presents socio-economic impact indicators.

Table 4: Socio-Economic Impact on Beneficiaries

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
My household income improved due to N-Power	3.13	0.75	Agree
The programme aided my career development	3.15	0.72	Agree
My overall living standards improved	3.14	0.77	Agree
The monthly stipend is sufficient for monthly expenses	2.33	0.91	Disagree

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The highest mean (3.15) was recorded for career development, while stipend sufficiency (mean = 2.33) fell below the 2.50 acceptance threshold. The relatively higher SD for stipend sufficiency (0.91) indicates considerable variation in respondents' perceptions of stipend adequacy relative to their living costs.

Sustainability and implementation challenges

Table 5 presents findings on programme sustainability and implementation challenges.

Table 5: Sustainability and Implementation Challenges

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
The N-Exit scheme supported post-programme transition	2.81	0.85	Agree
Irregular stipend payments are a major challenge	3.29	0.68	Agree
Corruption among programme officials is a challenge	3.08	0.79	Agree
Politicisation and weak targeting constrain effectiveness	3.07	0.81	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Irregular stipend payments recorded the highest mean (3.29) and lowest SD (0.68), indicating widespread and consistent consensus that this is the most critical challenge. Corruption (mean = 3.08, SD = 0.79) and politicisation (mean = 3.07, SD = 0.81) also emerged as significant constraints.

Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between the duration of participation in the N-Power Programme and improvement in household income among beneficiaries.

Table 6: Spearman's Correlation between Participation Duration and Income Improvement

Variable	N	Mean (months)	Spearman's rho	p-value	Decision
Participation Duration	352	18.4	0.412	0.000	Reject H_0
Income Improvement	352	3.13			

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Note: $p < 0.05$ (statistically significant).

The results show a moderate positive correlation (rho = 0.412, p = 0.000) between participation duration and perceived income improvement. The null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that longer programme participation is associated with greater income improvement.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide empirical support for the argument that the N-Power Programme has contributed to poverty reduction among youths in Bauchi State through improved skills acquisition, enhanced employability, and income support. These outcomes align with Social Investment Theory (Nolan, 2013), which posits that strategic investment in human capital generates cumulative returns for individuals and society. The observed improvements in technical skills (mean = 3.24, SD = 0.67) and career development (mean = 3.15, SD = 0.72) confirm that the programme has functioned as an active labour market intervention, consistent with findings by Akujuru and Enyioko (2019) in Rivers State and Nwaobi (2019) nationally.

The dominance of N-Power Teach (83.8%) reflects structural demand within the education sector and corroborates earlier studies suggesting that education-focused youth employment programmes generate more immediate labour market engagement (Akujuru & Enyioko, 2019; Lamidi & Igbokwe, 2021). Similarly, substantial participation in N-Power Agro (78.5%) aligns with Bauchi State's agrarian economic structure, reinforcing the importance of aligning youth employment programmes with local comparative advantages (World Bank, 2022).

From a Social Contract Theory perspective (Shaapera, 2012), the positive livelihood outcomes suggest that the programme has partially fulfilled the state's welfare obligations to its youth population. However, the persistence of irregular stipend payments (mean = 3.29, SD = 0.68), corruption (mean = 3.08, SD = 0.79), and politicisation (mean = 3.07, SD = 0.81) indicates partial and uneven fulfilment of this contract. These governance failures risk undermining citizens' trust in state institutions, consistent with broader critiques of Nigeria's social intervention programmes (Taiwo & Agwu, 2016; Onah & Olise, 2019; Onyeiwu, 2021).

The moderate effectiveness of the N-Exit scheme (mean = 2.81, SD = 0.85) and the perceived inadequacy of monthly stipends (mean = 2.33, SD = 0.91) highlight critical sustainability concerns. Social Investment Theory emphasises the importance of robust transition mechanisms linking temporary employment to sustainable livelihood outcomes (Nolan, 2013). The limited effectiveness of N-Exit therefore constrains the programme's capacity to deliver durable poverty reduction, increasing the risk that beneficiaries may revert to unemployment post-exit (Oyewo, 2021). The significant positive correlation between participation duration and income improvement (rho = 0.412, p = 0.000) provides quantitative evidence that programme benefits accumulate over time, reinforcing the logic of social investment. However, without addressing governance and sustainability constraints, these benefits remain fragile.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the impact of the N-Power Programme on poverty reduction among youths in Bauchi State, Nigeria. The findings demonstrate that N-Power has made meaningful contributions to improving human capital development, employability, income levels, and living standards among participating youths. These outcomes affirm the relevance of the programme as a social investment initiative and as a practical expression of the state's welfare obligations under the social contract framework.

However, the study also reveals that the programme's poverty-reducing effects are largely constrained by governance and institutional challenges, including irregular stipend payments, weak accountability mechanisms, politicisation, and limited post-exit support. The significant positive correlation between participation duration and income improvement confirms programme benefits but also underscores the need for longer-term engagement pathways. Without effective transition mechanisms into stable employment or entrepreneurship, the gains achieved through N-Power risk remaining short-term and reversible.

Overall, the study concludes that while the N-Power Programme holds significant potential as a tool for youth empowerment and poverty reduction, its long-term success depends on policy consistency, strengthened institutional capacity, and the effective integration of beneficiaries into sustainable livelihood systems beyond programme exit.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made. Each is explicitly linked to the empirical finding that justifies it.

1: Address Irregular Stipend Payments

Finding: Irregular stipend payments recorded the highest mean score (3.29, SD = 0.68), indicating this is the most critical and widely agreed challenge.

The Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation should implement an automated, biometric-based stipend payment system integrated with the Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS) to eliminate manual processing delays. Payment schedules should be published in advance, with a dedicated grievance redress mechanism for beneficiaries.

2: Combat Corruption and Politicisation

Finding: Corruption among officials (mean = 3.08, SD = 0.79) and politicisation/weak targeting (mean = 3.07, SD = 0.81) emerged as significant constraints.

An independent oversight committee comprising civil society representatives, community leaders, and audit professionals should be established at state and LGA levels to conduct quarterly random audits of beneficiary selection and stipend disbursement. Beneficiary selection should be depoliticised through transparent, merit-based criteria published online.

3: Strengthen the N-exit Scheme

Finding: The N-Exit scheme recorded only moderate effectiveness (mean = 2.81, SD = 0.85), and stipend sufficiency was rejected (mean = 2.33, SD = 0.91), indicating weak post-programme support.

The N-Exit scheme should be expanded through formal partnerships with private sector organisations, entrepreneurship hubs, and microfinance banks. Specifically: (a) 30% of exiting beneficiaries should be placed in paid internships with partner companies; (b) 30% should receive startup grants linked to business plan competitions; (c) 20% should access low-interest loans through the Bank of Industry; and (d) 20% should receive advanced skills certification. These targets should be tracked quarterly.

4: Enhance Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

Finding: Weak monitoring mechanisms and administrative inefficiencies were identified as systemic challenges.

A real-time digital dashboard should be deployed at state level, tracking key performance indicators: stipend payment timeliness (target: 95% on time), beneficiary attendance (target:

90%), skill acquisition milestones, and post-exit employment rates (target: 60% employed within six months). Data should be publicly accessible.

5: Improve Training Content and Certification

Finding: While skills acquisition was positive (mean = 3.24, SD = 0.67), the Tech component had the lowest participation (62.8%), suggesting barriers to digital skills access.

Training content should be aligned with industry-recognised certifications (e.g., Microsoft, Google, Cisco for Tech; FAO, NABG for Agro). ICT infrastructure should be expanded to rural LGAs through mobile training units and community technology hubs.

6: Address Gender Imbalance in Participation

Finding: Female participation (39.8%) significantly lagged behind male participation (60.2%), reflecting broader socio-cultural and structural constraints on women in northern Nigeria.

A gender-targeted recruitment strategy should be implemented, including: (a) minimum 45% female representation targets for all components; (b) female-only training cohorts for Tech and Agro components; (c) provision of childcare support during training sessions; and (d) engagement of female community mobilisers.

7: Institutionalise Policy Coordination

Finding: Policy discontinuity and weak institutional coordination were identified as underlying constraints.

The NSIP should be institutionalised through legislative backing rather than executive discretion. An inter-ministerial coordination committee (Ministries of Youth, Education, Agriculture, Health, and Finance) should meet monthly to ensure alignment across sectors.

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