



## **Assessment of the Contribution of N-Agro Programme on Youth Empowerment in Zaria and Sabon Gari Local Government Areas of Kaduna State**

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### **Abstract**

Youth empowerment remains one of the most challenging socio-economic problem of governments across the globe. In carrying out this responsibility, government at all level strive towards creating conducive economic atmosphere for the teeming youth population so as to enable the youth gainfully engaged in various descent means of livelihood and become economically viable. The paper assess the Contribution of N-Agro Programme on Youth Empowerment in Zaria and Sabon Gari Local Government Areas of Kaduna State. The problem investigated revolves around the Contribution of N-Agro of N- Power Programme on youth empowerment in Zaria and Sabon Gari Local Government Areas of Kaduna state. The Objective of the study is to assess the Contribution of the N-power Agro Programme on youth empowerment in Zaria and Sabon Gari Local Government Areas of Kaduna. System theory by David Easton 1957 was adopted as a theoretical framework for the work. The data for the study were generated from primary and secondary sources. Questionnaires were distributed on a sample of 351 respondents selected from the 4000 population of the study through a stratified and simple random sampling techniques, Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Regression analysis tests result revealed that N-power Agro Programme has a significant contribution on youth empowerment in Zaria and Sabon Gari Local Government Areas of Kaduna. Based on the above findings, it was recommended among other things that Government should offer an exit package to exiting beneficiaries. This will help in sustaining the achieved objective of the scheme for taking the beneficiaries off the streets and Policies aimed at youth empowerment should be broad-based that cut across all sectors of the economy and the private sector should be encouraged in the same regard and Government, private individuals and Non-Governmental Organizations should provide grants and/or loans to the beneficiaries to boost their skills and/or start up small or medium scale businesses.

**Keywords:** N-power, N-Agro, and Youth Empowerment, Kaduna State

## **Introduction**

The responsibility of governments across the globe in providing paid employment for her active population especially the youth segment of the society remains sacrosanct. In carrying out this responsibility, government at all levels, strive towards creating conducive economic atmosphere for the teeming population to be gainfully engaged in various descent means of livelihood so as to make them productive and actively contributes to the economy. Also, government make efforts to keep pace with the ever-growing population which if not properly managed could become unmanageable. The African nations are endowed with a large youthful population with over 75% of the population estimated to be under the age of 35 years, thus creating a demographic divide where the working age population is more than

non-working age population. However, out of this population, many are unemployed or underemployed due to several factors thereby creating a potential risk of demographic curse.

In Nigeria, more than any other time in the history of the nation, unemployment seems to have escalated beyond manageable limit (Asaju, Arome & Anyio, 2016). Accordingly, The National Bureau of Statistics (2019) maintains that youth unemployment stands at 32.45% as at second quarter of 2018 while the youth population within the same period stood at 42.54% with a dependency ratio of 88.2% per a 100 non dependents. Based on the current situation, it is not surprising at all, that the crime rate in the Country has been on the rise, as evident in kidnapping, armed robbery, ritual killings, banditry, drug abuse, internet scam, Ponzi schemes, prostitution and more (Ukwayi, Angioha & Ojong-Ejoh, 2018; Angioha, Nwagboso, Ironbar & Ishie, 2018).

However, government awareness of the current youth unemployment in Nigeria, and the fact that successive government efforts on youth empowerment programme such as; the National Directorate for Employment (NDE), the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) seem to have yielded marginal result. Consequently, the government of President Muhammadu Buhari has evolved a new paradigm to curb youth unemployment and reduce social crime as well as boost economic development in the country (Eze, 2019; Okeke & Ngonadi, 2017; Abada & Omeh, 2019; Ojong, Iji, & Angioha, 2019).

Youth empowerment is one of the cardinal campaign promises of the President Muhammadu Buhari led government, seeing the perennial problems of youth unemployment in the country introduced N-Power- empowerment programme of the National Social Investment Programme of the Federal Government of Nigeria. The programme is for young Nigerians between the ages of 18 and 35 years. Knowing that skills and knowledge are the driving forces of economic growth and social development; the government in 2016, through N-Power, engaged and deployed 200,000 young Nigerians in Public Primary Schools, Primary Healthcare Centers, Agriculture Development Project and training centers in all the Local Government Areas in Nigeria. Out of this 200,000, a total of 4495 were deployed to Kaduna state. While Another 300,000 young graduates and non-graduates have been added in 2017, out of which 7887 were deployed to Kaduna state. Bringing to a total of 500,000 Nigerians being empowered and 12,382 in Kaduna state.

Though these figures of unemployed youths are mind boggling, despite the various efforts by successive administrations. In Nigeria, youth unemployment has been a longstanding issue, with a large proportion of the population under the age of 35. According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the youth unemployment rate in Nigeria was over 40%, one of the highest in the world. This high unemployment rate has

led to a myriad of social and economic challenges, including increased crime rates, poverty, and social unrest.

In Kaduna state specifically, the story is no less disheartening. Despite being a major economic hub in northern Nigeria, the state has struggled to provide employment opportunities for its youth population. Factors such as inadequate investment in education and skills development, as well as the impact of communal and ethno-religious conflicts, have contributed to the high level of youth unemployment in the state.

The lack of sustainable job opportunities has resulted in many young people turning to informal and often unsustainable means of livelihood. This situation has not only affected the economic well-being of the youth but has also had broader implications for the state's development and stability.

Efforts to address youth unemployment in Nigeria and Kaduna State have included initiatives aimed at promoting entrepreneurship, vocational training, and skills development. However, the scale of the challenge remains substantial, and a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach is needed to effectively tackle this issue.

Therefore, this study aimed at; assessing the contribution of the N-Agro programme on youth empowerment in Zaria and Sabon Gari Local Government Areas of Kaduna State.

## **Conceptual Exploration**

### **Youth**

The concept of youth can best be understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence.

The United Nations for statistical purposes, defined 'youth' as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years.

However for the purpose of this paper, youth can be defined as the time of life of Human between childhood and adulthood. (i.e between the ages of 15 and 35 years).

### **N-Power Agro**

N-Power Agro is the Agricultural programme designed to provide extension services to rural farmers across the country. As used in this study refers to the platform for Agriculture Extension services, Seeds, fertilizer and other input aggregators, farm manager, collection and compilation of farm records and farming co-operatives management.

## **Concept of Youth Empowerment**

Uzochukwu (2009) defined youth empowerment as the means through which the youths are assisted to succeed in life. According to the author, it is shameful that when youth empowerment is mentioned, people think that it is only the function and responsibilities of the government to empower the youths. Youth empowerment is of good importance to both individuals, community, nations, and the empowered. With youth empowerment, the future prosperity of nations is secured because these are the people that are, and will take care of many offices and functions in the country.

Omotere (2011) defined youth empowerment as a process whereby young people gain the ability and authority to make decisions and implement change in their own lives. He further explained that youth empowerment can be exercised at homes, schools, through youth organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, government policy-making, and community organizing campaigns.

Ezeani (2012) youth empowerment is an attitudinal, structural, and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability, authority, and agency to make decisions and implement change in their own lives and the lives of other people including the youths and adults. According to Amadi and Abdullah (2012) revealed that youth empowerment scheme is a capacity-building that implies vocational training and skills development that prepare the youth to be more productive in society.

Muluka (2012) sees youth empowerment as an attitudinal, structural, and cultural process whereby young people derive the ability, willingness, readiness, and authority to make decisions and implement positive change in their own lives and to the intended beneficiaries around them.

## **Concept of Agriculture**

Agricultural science is the study of the relationship between soils, plants and animals in the production and processing of food, fibre, fuel and any other agricultural commodities that have an economic, aesthetic or cultural value (South Africa Qualification Authority, 2003) it is an integrated science that combines the knowledge and skills from physical life, social, and earth sciences, engineering, mathematics and economics (South Africa Qualification Authority, 2003) Oberle and Keeney (1990) stated that, "agricultural science is a complex and multidisciplinary field that represents the vital link between human (socioeconomic) systems and the natural environment.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation opines that agriculture is an industry that produces, processes and markets food largely in response to the daily demands of consumers within a given area, town, city and metropolis, dispersed throughout

the urban areas, applying intensive production methods, using and re-using natural resources and urban wastes to yield a diversity of crops and livestock (FAO, 2004).

Opio (2003) sees agriculture to mean, the production, processing and marketing of crops, livestock and fish from producer to consumer. Agriculture as defined is a major part of overall natural resource based activity. Other areas include forestry and wild life. Agricultural enterprises range from large capital intensive production and processing units to small-scale activities ranging forming only part of the people's livelihood strategies in the developed or industrialized countries. In contrast, the majority of agricultural products in developing countries are grown, processed and marketed by small family operated enterprises. Agriculture is the practice of cultivating the land breeding and keeping of livestock (Clayton 1989, cited in Ajayi, 2013).

According to Ighodo (2004), agriculture is the art and science of the cultivation of crops and rearing of animals for man's use. He also emphasized that agriculture is also the production of fibres for industries, processing of farm produce, packaging and marketing of farm products. This definition is quite embracing as it covers all activities that ensure man's survival.

## Literature Review

A study carried out by Aderinoye and Muhammad (2020) on the assessment of the training needs of the N-power Agro beneficiaries in Kwara state. The study utilized a simple random sampling technique, a total of 216 respondents were selected, and the study deployed the instrument of questionnaires for data collection. The study focused primarily on the training need of the beneficiaries. The study however, ignored the contribution of the programme on youth empowerment thereby setting the stage for this current work: assessment of N-power programme on youth empowerment.

In a separate study conducted by Victor and Adewale (2020) titled "Unlocking the potentials of agribusiness in Africa through youth participation; an impact evaluation of N-power Agro empowerment programme in Nigeria. Data for the study were collected using structured pre-test questionnaire and the n-power administrative data set (which contains contact details of the participants and the sampling frame of participants and non-participants). This study primarily focused on the willingness of both participant and non-participants to venture into agribusiness, the study however ignored the contribution of the programme on youth empowerment. The study also utilized both participants (n-power beneficiaries) and non- participants as part of the population for the study whereas in this current work, the study will focus solely on the participant (beneficiaries).

## Research Methodology

On the whole, 351 questionnaires were administered in the two local government Areas under study. Out of which 347 representing 98.8% of the total questionnaire administered were returned. Therefore, 347 formed the basis of our analysis and interpretation.

### Method of Data Collection

The population of this study consist of all the N-power Agro beneficiaries in batch A,B and batch C in Kaduna state. However, the target population for the study consist of both NSIP Focal staff and all beneficiaries of N-power Agro Programme in Zaria and Sabon Gari Local Government Areas of Kaduna state, there are 1,740 beneficiaries in Sabon Gari and 2,260 beneficiaries in Zaria Local Government Areas of Kaduna State making a total of 4,000 beneficiaries across the three (3) batches.

Based on the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling table, the sample size for 4000 is approximately 351. The study used mixed method and adopted concurrent embedded research design. The design allows for making quantitative and qualitative analysis of data generated through questionnaire and interview instruments. Data collected through questionnaire were analysed using multiple regression analysis, while responses from interviews were analysed using thematic method to complement the data collected through questionnaire. The responses of the respondents were used to measure on the five-point Likert scale of Strongly Disagree (SD). Disagree (D) Undecided (U); Strongly Agree (SA); and Agree (A).

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Analysis of the data collected for hypothesis which states that, “The N-Agro of N-Power Programmes has no significant contribution on youth empowerment in Zaria and Sabon gari Local Government Areas of Kaduna state.”. The data collected were presented and analyzed as follows:

### Data Presentation

Analysis of the data collected for hypothesis two which states that, “The N-Agro of N-power Programmes has no significant contribution on youth empowerment in Zaria and Sabon gari Local Government Areas of Kaduna state.” The data collected were presented and analyzed as follows:

**Table 1: Demographical Characteristic of the Respondents**

S/N	Variables	Particular	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
1		Male	200	57.6

	Gender	Female	147	42.4
		Total	347	100
2	Educational level	WAEC,GCE,NECO, SSCE	0	0
		NCE	47	13.5
		OND/ND	40	11.5
		HND	85	24.5
		Degree	125	36.1
		Postgraduate	50	14.4
		Total	347	100
		Npower Agro	374	100
		Total	347	100
4	Npower Batch	Batch A	157	45.2
		Batch B	140	40.3
		Batch C	50	14.5
		Total	347	100

Source; Researchers' field Survey, 2021

Table 3.3.1 above contains the demographical characteristic of the respondents in study area, which shows that 57.6% of the respondents are male, while 42.4% were female. This shows that the majority of the respondents among the respondents are male that constitutes 57.6% as against female that recorded 42.4%. The table further explained educational level, which reveals that 13.5% and 11.5% are those who possessed NCE and OND/ND, while 24.5% were HND holders, 36.1% holds first Degree, and 14.4% holds postgraduate certificates respectively and none of the respondents were SSCE holder. The data above shows that 36.1% the respondents possessed first degree which constitutes the highest. In terms of the beneficiary's batch, 45.2% were batch A beneficiaries, 40.3% were from batch B while 15.5% were from batch C respectively. This revealed that Batch A with 45.2% were the highest beneficiaries among the respondents.

**Table 2:N-power Agro programme has empowered the volunteers to carryout Agricultural extension services**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	146	42.0
Agree	101	29.1
Undecided	6	1.7
Disagree	49	14.1
Strongly disagree	45	12.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: SPSS output from field survey, 2021.

From the table 3.3.2 above, it can be seen that 146 respondent representing 42.0% of the respondents strongly agree that N-power Agro programme have empowered the volunteers to carryout Agricultural extension services. 101 respondents representing 29.1% of the respondents agreed with the assertion. 6 respondents representing 1.7% were undecided. 49 respondents representing 14.1% of the respondents disagreed with the assertion. Very insignificant number of the respondents i.e. 45 representing 12.9% of the entire respondents strongly disagreed with the above assertion.

This therefore suggests that 247 respondents representing 71.2% of the respondents unanimously agreed that, N-power Agro programme have empowered the volunteers to carryout Agricultural extension services.

**Table3: The volunteers have become aggregators of seedlings, fertilizer and other farm inputs.**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	176	50.7
Agree	114	32.9
Undecided	13	3.7
Disagree	11	3.2
Strongly disagree	33	9.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: SPSS output from field survey, 2021.

From the table 3.3.3 above, it can be seen that 176 respondent representing 50.7% of the respondents strongly agree that the volunteers have become aggregators of seedlings, fertilizer and other farm inputs. 114 respondents representing 32.9% of the respondents agreed with the assertion. 13 respondents representing 3.7% were undecided. 11 respondents representing 3.2% of the respondents disagreed with the assertion. Very insignificant number of the respondents i.e. 33 representing 9.5% of the entire respondents strongly disagreed with the above assertion. This suggested that, 290 respondents representing 83.6% of the respondents unanimously agreed that, the volunteers have become aggregators of seedlings, fertilizer and other farm inputs.

**Table 4: The N-power Agro empowerment programme has made the volunteers to become farm managers**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	119	34.3
Agree	129	37.2
Undecided	43	12.4
Disagree	16	4.6
Strongly disagree	40	11.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: SPSS output from field survey, 2021.

From the table 3.3.4 above, it can be seen that 119 respondent representing 34.3% of the respondents strongly agree that N-power Agro empowerment programme have made the volunteers to become farm managers. 129 respondents representing 37.2% of the respondents agreed with the assertion. 43 respondents representing 12.4% were undecided, 16 respondents representing 6.4% of the respondents disagreed with the assertion. Very insignificant number of the respondents i.e. 40 representing 11.5% of the entire respondents strongly disagreed with the above assertion. This shows that, 248 respondents representing 71.5% of the respondents unanimously agreed that, The N-power Agro empowerment programme have made the volunteers to become farm managers.

**Table 5 The N-Agro programme have made the volunteers to gain knowledge to become an agro-entrepreneurs.**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	30	8.6
Agree	136	39.1
Undecided	29	8.4
Disagree	122	35.2
Strongly disagree	30	8.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: SPSS output from field survey, 2021.**

From the table 3.3.5 above, it can be seen that 30 respondent representing 8.6% of the respondents strongly agree that N-Agro programme have made the volunteers to gain knowledge to become an agro-entrepreneur. 136 respondents representing 39.1% of the respondents agreed with the assertion. 29 respondents representing 8.4% were undecided, 122 respondents representing 35.2% of the respondents disagreed with the assertion. Very insignificant number of the respondents i.e. 30 representing 8.6% of the entire respondents strongly disagreed with the above assertion. This revealed that 166 respondents representing 47.8% of the respondents unanimously agreed that, N-Agro programme have made the volunteers to gain knowledge to become an agro-entrepreneurs.

**Table 6: N-Agro Beneficiaries by batch in Zaria and Sabon Gari LGA**

LGA	Batch A	Batch B	Batch C	Total
	<b>45.2%</b>	<b>40.3%</b>	<b>14.5%</b>	
<b>Zaria LGA</b>	1021.52	910.78	327.7	2260
<b>Sabon Gari LGA</b>	786	701	253	1740
<b>Total</b>				<b>4,000</b>

**Source: SPSS output from field survey, 2021.**

Table 3.3.7 above, shows the distribution of N-teach beneficiaries in Zaria and Sabon Gari Areas of Kaduna state across Batch A, B and C respectively. A total of 2260 beneficiaries were deployed in Zaria while 1740 beneficiaries were deployed in Sabon Gari Local Government Area bringing to a total of 4000 beneficiaries.

### Regression Analysis and Test of Hypothesis

To test the hypothesis formulated in this research, linear regression was used to assess the contribution of the N-Agro Programme on Youth Empowerment in Zaria and Sabon Gari Local Government Areas of Kaduna State. The results from Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) are presented below:

**Table 8 Regression Output**  
ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Prob.
1	Regression	873.032	4	218.258	188.247	0.000
	Residual	396.405	342	1.159		
	Total	1269.437	346			

a. Dependent Variable: Youth Empowerment

b. Predictors: (Constant), N-Agro

**Source: SPSS Output, 2021.**

Table 3.3.8 above shows the results from the multiple regression analysis which tests the contribution of the independent variables on Youth Empowerment in Zaria and Sabon Gari Local Government Areas of Kaduna State. The F-statistic which measures the adequacy and fitness of the model used in the study stood at 188.247 with a p-value of 0.000 which is significant at 5%; this shows that the model is fit for the data.

**Table 9 Regression Output 1**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.811	0.658	0.642	0.989

**Source: SPSS Output, 2021.**

Table 3.3.9 above shows the summary of the regression analysis. The empirical findings show that R, the multiple correlation coefficient, stood at 0.811 which indicates a strong positive correlation between the variables.

$R^2$ , the multiple coefficient of determination of the variables stood at 0.658 indicating that about 65.8% of the total variation on the Youth Empowerment in Zaria and Sabon gari Local government areas of Kaduna State is explained by the independent variables while the remaining 34.2% was captured by error term.

The adjusted  $R^2$  being 0.642 also indicates that the independent variables will still explain 64.2% of the variations even if other variables were added to the study.

**Table 3.3.10 Regression Output 2**  
**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Prob.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	8.543	1.236		6.911	0.000
	N-Agro	0.524	.409	.481	1.281	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Youth Empowerment

**Source: SPSS output 2021.**

Table 3.3.10 above shows the outcome of the respective variables on youth empowerment. Upon the fulfilment of the assumptions of regression analysis, multiple regression analysis was considered suitable in testing the research hypotheses at 5% level of significance. From the Table the model is presented as follows:

$$YE = 8.543 + 0.524x_1 + \varepsilon$$

$x_c$  = Youth Empowerment

$x_1$  = N-Agro

$\varepsilon$  = Error term (Signifying factors not included in the model).

### **N-Agro and Youth empowerment in Zaria and Sabon Gari Local government Areas of Kaduna State**

There are differing views among the respondents on the contribution of N-agro to youth empowerment as some of the respondents stated thus:

“N-agro component of N-power generated employment opportunities for the unemployed youths who were educated in agricultural related courses in Kaduna State”. they added that the youths are either recruited as extension workers to disseminating the required knowledge that has been aggregated by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development or as researchers to gather data of Nigeria’s agriculture assets. More so, some of them are now empowered to manage private farms with good collection, compilation and keeping of farm records (R<sub>1</sub>, R<sub>2</sub>, R<sub>3</sub>, and R<sub>4</sub>).

On the contrary, other respondents argued that: N-agro component of N-power programme only helped the youths with political connection, leaving the vulnerable groups with no chances to beneficiaries of the said programme; they added that the N-power programme failed to do feasibility study of the unemployed youths thus ended up recruiting even the employed youths (R<sub>5</sub>, R<sub>6</sub>, R<sub>7</sub> and R<sub>8</sub>).

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of the paper revealed that the N-Agro of the N-power programme has positive significant contribution on youth empowerment in Zaria and Sabon Gari Local

Government Areas of Kaduna State. The coefficient of “N-Agro” stood at 0.704 which is positive. This implies that the N-Agro of the N-power programme has significant contribution on youth empowerment. However, the significance of this can be judged from the t statistics and its significance.

The t statistics of “N-Agro” stood at 1.867 with a p-value of 0.002 which is less than 0.05, indicating that the relationship depicted in the model is significant at 95% confidence level. This implies that the study does not have enough statistical evidence to accept the null hypothesis. Therefore, the study failed to accept the null hypothesis ( $H_{02}$ ), which states that the N-Agro of N-power Programmes has no significant contribution on youth empowerment in Zaria and Sabon Gari Local Government Areas of Kaduna state, but accepts its alternate hypothesis ( $H_{12}$ ) which states that The N-Agro of N-power Programmes has significantly contributed on youth empowerment in Zaria and Sabon Gari Local Government Areas of Kaduna state.

To them, idlest youths before N-power programme are now engaged in agricultural activities. This is complemented by N-power Volunteers Guide (2017) as the document showed that 4,000 youths have benefited from N-Agro component of the youth empowerment programme from 2016 to 2020.

## Conclusion

In view of the finding of this study above, it is clear that the N-Agro programme has tremendously contributed in the area of youth empowerment in Zaria and Sabon gari Local Government Areas of Kaduna state. Study also revealed that, the idle youths before N-power programme are now engaged in Agricultural activities, as supporting extension service staff in the respective area of primary assignment and hence there is need to expand the enrollment capacity of the N-power programme so to absorb more youths into the programme.

## Recommendations

- Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were proffered:
- The study recommends based on the findings of study that, N-Agro programme has immensely contributed to youth empowerment in the study area, therefore Government should offer an exit package inform of grants or start-up seed capital to the outgoing beneficiaries to enable them set-up their own businesses or expand the existing businesses so as to consolidates on the achievements recorded which in return can generate employment opportunities for other youth.
  - Policies aimed at youth empowerment should be broad-based that cut across all sectors of the economy and the private sector should be encouraged in the same regard so as to spread the coverage of the programme and absorb more unemployed youth including those in rural areas thereby making them more productive economically.

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