

Radio Nigeria 2009 Annual October Lecture

Theme: Poverty Alleviation

Topic: Solutions to the Challenge of Poverty in Nigeria

Guest: Dr. Magnus Kpakol

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Speech Of The Senior Special Assistant To The President And
National Coordinator Napep, Dr. Magnus L. Kpakol At The Frcn
Annual Lecture Held On The 29th Of October 2009

At The Merit House, Maitama, Abuja.

TOPIC: SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGES OF POVERTY ERADICATION IN NIGERIA

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Poverty anywhere and everywhere is “the inability of man to control his environment and when this is the situation means is under the control of his environment with all its vicissitudes, vagaries and uncertainties of which often result in the prevalence of poverty.”

The attendant effect of this scenario is the inability of the poor to meet the challenges, the basic necessities of life which include in the main, food, clothing and shelter.

There are three basic challenges which the poor everywhere must confront if there must be solutions to poverty including Nigeria.

These challenges are the following:-

- i. Access to capital
- ii. Access to information
- iii. Access to stable market.

Lack of access to capital

Lack of access to capital means the inability of the poor to acquire the necessary tools for productions.

In the layman’s language this means lack of money to acquire the necessary implements to combat poverty.

Lack of access to information

The poor often does not possess the necessary information and therefore adequate knowledge that would empower him to fight poverty.

The reason for is often the prohibitive cost of obtaining requisite information which is often out the reason of the poor.

Lack of access to stable market

The lack of access to stable market where the poor can exchange his products as at a good price is a major challenge to the poor.

Often the products of the poor and up among the poor thereby restricting his income. An example of his situation is the glut in the production of basic commodities which is often the case at harvest times.

The question then is how can the poor overcome these challenges in Nigeria in order to be in a position to tackle the issue of poverty?

To tackle the issue of lack of access to capital, it must be acknowledged that capital {or money} is always a scarce commodity.

This raises the question of how best to expose the poor to capital. Studies have shown that in order to solve this problem, the issue of micro-credit must be creatively delivered to the poor to enable them have access to the required capital to combat poverty.

Recently, the establishment of numerous micro finance institutions and banks that seek to provide capital to the poor has received a big boost.

This development should be encouraged while NAPEP involvement in micro-credit coordination through partnerships, should be highly commended.

To tackle the issue of lack of access to information, a lot more has to be done to communicate the necessary information that would enhance the knowledge pool of the poor. This will lay bare to him, the various options at his disposal in making his choices. In this regard, community sensitization and mobilization are very critical. NAPEP has robust community sensitization machinery which

communicates effectively with various publics including especially the poor.

To tackle the issue of lack of access to stable market, there must be cautious efforts to cultivate and develop markets for the products manufactured by the poor. In order to achieve this, the poor must be assisted to add value to their products in order to make them competitive. This is the surest way to enhance the value of goods produced by the poor.

No doubt, Nigeria is basically an agricultural producing country where people especially women engage in food production chains.

Therefore, they must be empowered to contribute to the fight against poverty through skill acquisition, improved methods of production and techniques to fight the poverty scourge. NAPEP's Village Solutions Programme seeks to do that by enabling the rural communities become engines of production.

NAPEP as the apex agency for poverty eradication, fully aware that money alone cannot be a panacea to poverty unless there is a conscious

community efforts aimed at assisting the poor. It has therefore innovatively designed projects or schemes such as the village economic development solutions that attempt to spur mass participation of the people at the grassroots.

However, these schemes must be supported by the community leaders or personalities, which would serve as 'development drivers' of their communities.

They will then be the Anchor personalities or Champions of their people, who would contribute in the establishment of trust funds at their levels.

Resources available to these trust funds will then be invested and proceeds from such investments would be used to develop the communities.

In conclusion, NAPEP alone cannot claim to have all the solutions.

We therefore welcome contributions, partnership especially with the media to help not only in providing resources but also sensitization that are necessary for any meaningful attainment of the goals of poverty eradication.

Profile of Dr. Magnus L. Kpakol

Senior Special Assistant to Mr. President and National Coordinator (NAPEP)

Dr. Magnus L. Kpakol is the Senior Special Assistant to the President and National Coordinator of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in Nigeria, before joining the government.

From 2001 – 2003 he served as Chief Economic Adviser to the President of Nigeria.

He was also CEO of National Planning Commission, where he was responsible for developing national economic policy programmes for the President and for preparing the nation's development plans for budgeting and overall economic management.

He was first appointed National Coordinator NAPEP in 2003 and reappointed in 2007.

NAPEP is the secretariat of the National Poverty Eradication Council, chaired by the President.

As National Coordinator of NAPEP, he oversees and coordinates for the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, all efforts aimed at poverty eradication in the country. As National Coordinator of NAPEP, he works with various development partners for the purposes of partnership in Nigeria's poverty eradication activities. Before joining the Federal republic of Nigeria in 2001, he was a Professor of Economics at the University of Dallas, in Irving Texas and an adjunct Professor of Economics at the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas. He was the President and

Principal Consultant of VIJNS International, a business and management consulting firm in Carrollton, Texas. Dr. Kpakol worked at JC Penney Company, one of the largest retailers in the world as a Senior Economist and its Principal International Economist.

Dr. Kpakol is a member of the Board of Trustees of John Brown University in Siloam Springs, Arkansas.

He is a member of various international organizations, including the American Economic Association, Dallas Economists' Club, where he once served as the Chairman of Education Committee, the National Association of Business Economists (NABE), serving on NABE's international and regional roundtables.

Dr. Kpakol is recognized as an authority on global economic issues and has featured many times on United States network television and radio news shows as an expert on United States consumer economics and African and Latin American economies. He has been quoted in various magazines and newspapers, including the Wall Street Journal, USA Today, The Dallas Morning News and the Fort Worth Star Telegram.

Dr. Kpakol obtained a Bachelor of Science from the University of Wisconsin, Superior. He did graduate studies in Economics, and Industrial Relations at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. He subsequently obtained a Master of Science Degree in Labor Economics and Industrial Relations at the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas. He received a Master of Arts Degree, and a Ph.D in political Economy from the University of Texas at Dallas.

Dr. Kpakol is a native of Barayonwa Dere in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State; he is married and has two children. He specializes in International Economics, Economic Development and Policy Analysis. He is the author of the book: *The International Monetary Fund and Structural Adjustment in Africa*, (New York: Praeger Publishing) forthcoming.

Dr. Magnus L. Kpakol is a winner of the prestigious Kwame Nkrumah Africa Award for Leadership in 2004.