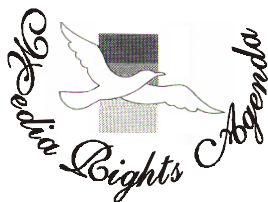


EXECUTIVE

WATCH

**A Public Assessment Of President Obasanjo's
Government Policy Statements And Actions**



FEBRUARY 2000

...promoting and protecting press freedom and freedom of expression in Nigeria.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This is the sixth report under the Executive Watch Project of Media Rights Agenda, a non governmental organisation established for the purpose of promoting and protecting press freedom and freedom of expression.

Media Rights Agenda is a member of the Transition Monitoring Group (T.M.G) a coalition of human rights, non-governmental and civil society organisations formed in August 1998 for the purpose of developing integrity in the electoral process by monitoring on the prosecution of the political programme.

Under the Executive Watch project, Media Rights Agenda monitors the activities and policies of the Executive arm of government particularly the Presidency, to ascertain the popularity such activities and policies enjoy among a wide spectrum of Nigerians.

This report was written by **Osaro Odemwingie**, Publications Officer for M.R.A., while **Ademoyewa Johnson**, Campaign Officer at M.R.A., conducted the research exercise for the report. **Mercy Epete Jones**, Litigation Officer at M.R.A. provided the secretarial services for the report.

The project is supervised by **Edetaen Ojo**, M.R.A.'s Executive Director.

EXECUTIVE WATCH

INTRODUCTION

Executive Watch is a project of Media Rights Agenda through which it monitors the activities and policies of the Executive arm of Government, particularly the Presidency, to ascertain the popularity such activities and policies enjoy among a wide spectrum of Nigerians.

The overall objective of the project is to monitor our nascent democracy by keeping track of the Executive's performance and popularity and serve as a feedback to the government to enable it serve Nigerians better.

The monitoring exercise is being carried out on a monthly basis and it involves identification of some major policy decisions, comments and actions of the Executive, particularly President Olusegun Obasanjo, during the preceding months.

This sixth report under this project addresses the poverty alleviation programme launched on February 14th 2000. The respondents in this report are limited to the Lagos area. It is, however, hoped that this shall be broadened in future to include respondents from other states of the federation including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Lagosians Laud the National Poverty Alleviation Programme, Expresses Fear Of Politisation.

The launching of the National Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAPP) by President Olusegun Obasanjo has been described as laudable by Lagosians who have adduced lack of clear focus and the sense of responsibility by the previous administrations as the major problem that led to the failure of the previous programme designed at alleviating poverty in Nigeria. Respondent identified conducive political and economical environment as enabling impetus that would enhance the revival of closed industries and self-employment initiatives, the best index to measure the success of the new programme.

But quite a significant number of respondents however expressed the fear that the programme could be hijacked by political parties who are saddled with the responsibility of implementing the programme and as well, will serve as another avenue for people to line their pockets with public funds.

These were the views of Lagosians in yet another survey carried out by Media Rights Agenda, a press freedom and freedom of expression group.

On Monday February 14th 2000, President Obasanjo, in Abuja, launched the National Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), which was simultaneously launched in all the states of the Federation by the governors. The scheme is expected to create 200,000 jobs and would cost N10 billion. Fifty per cent of the job would go to the unemployed youths in the age bracket of (17-30), the remaining 50% would be shared on gender basis amongst men and women at 25% apiece. The beneficiaries known as Poverty Alleviation Programme Participant (PAPP) would be employed for one year on a minimum wage of N3,500.

The survey conducted between February 16th and 23rd 2000 involved the administration of 800 questionnaires comprising six questions, four of which were open ended requiring respondents to state in their own words their responses and two close ended questions.

Question No. 1a sought to know if the scheme was considered to be a welcome development with a 'Yes' or 'No' answer. Respondents who answered 'No' in Question No. 1a were asked in Question No. 1b to state their reasons. The second question asked what factors contributed to the failure of the previous programme by past administration aimed at poverty alleviation.

Question three, sought to know the modifications that the respondents would suggest to the implementation of the PAP, so as not to suffer the fate of the previous poverty alleviation programme.

Question No. 4 asked if respondents do not see the programme being politicized, considering the proviso that interested persons should register at the local government manned by political party office holders. Further, respondents were asked in Question No. 5 if the recruitment of 5,000 persons from each state in a year would solve the problem of youth unemployment, social vices and tension in the nation. Respondents were to answer 'Yes' or 'No'. Those who answered 'No' were in Question No. 6 to provide options of the number of persons to be recruited in each state and the duration.

The questionnaire were distributed to include people of broad educational background. These include people with no formal education up to primary education level, post primary education level and post secondary education level in the ration of 200, 250, and 350 respectively.

Out of 800 questionnaires distributed, 690 were returned and 117 were not returned. This shows a return rate of 86.25% and a mortality rate of 13.75%. It is important to note that 7 respondents said they would rather prefer to reserve their comment and watch as event unfolds itself.

From the total of 690 respondents, 150 of them are in the sub group of respondents with at most primary education background. Two hundred and ten belong to the respondents with post-primary education background, and the other 330, belong to the group of respondents with post-secondary education background.

Five hundred and thirty-one respondents representing 77% considered the programme a welcome development. Besides seven respondents who choose to stay neutral, 152 respondents, representing 22%, said they do not consider the programme as a welcome development. Asked what their reasons were, respondents said the programme is likely to be hijacked for political patronage and thus favouritism. Other fears expressed by those respondents are that there is the possibility of the programme being used as an avenue by those saddled with the implementation to line their pockets with public funds. This seems to suggest a cross section of the public's continued reluctance to buy President Obasanjo's assurances of his ability to change the conduct of government's business from the business as usual practice. There is also the dissatisfaction with the fact that the programme is limited to artisans and the duration is too short.

On reasons for the failure of past efforts at poverty alleviation, lack of consistency in government policies and implementation came tops with 210 respondents representing 30.4% listing it. One hundred and eighty-one respondents representing 26.2% said corruption was the major factor that led to the collapse of the similar programmes on poverty alleviation embarked upon by previous government. Others include, unstable political climate, inadequate publicity and the failure of government to put in place a monitoring unit to supervise the programme.

Out of the 11 points listed by respondent as necessary modifications to ensure the success of the President Obasanjo poverty alleviation programme, only the last four on the list qualifies as modifications in the real sense. These include a call for the programme to be made profit oriented to enable it to be self sustaining and hence sustainable, the extension of the programme time frame to cover one year, incorporation of private and foreign participation, and extension of beneficiary to include university graduates.

Asked if they fear a possible politisation of the programme given that it is to be implemented using the politically controlled government structure already in place, 523 respondents representing 76% answered “Yes”. One hundred and sixty respondents representing 23 % answered “No”, while the remaining seven respondents representing one % were neutral.

A wide majority of the respondents are also of the opinion that the recruitment of 5,000 persons in one year in each state will solve the problem of acute youth unemployment, social vices and tension which have become persistent in Nigeria society. Specifically, 507 of the respondents representing 73.4 % share this view, while 176 respondents representing 25.5% said the recruitment of 5,000 participants for one year will not solve the youth unemployment and other associated vices plaguing Nigeria. Seven respondents, representing 1%, however, stayed neutral.

The last question specifically refer to the 176 respondents who see as inadequate the recruitment of 5,000 persons and the duration of one year. Asked how many persons they would like to be recruited for the programme, 24 respondents representing 14% said 10,000 persons, 22 respondents representing 12% said 20,000 persons, 12 respondents representing 7% said 50,000 persons, while 103 respondents representing 58% said 100,000 persons. Twenty-two respondents representing 12% elected under the option of ‘E’ which states “specify any other,” that the number of participants should be determined by the number of jobless youths in each state.

On duration, 16 respondents representing 9% said 2 years, 69 respondents representing 39% said 5 years, 2 respondents representing 1% said 10 years, while in the last option which states “specify any other,” 89 respondents representing 51% said participants should be recruited for life.

BACKGROUND

Alexandra Pope once posited that: “For forms of government, let fools debate, what is best, is best administered”. What the learned gentleman was trying to convey is that there is inherently no form of government that guarantees fulfillment of the people’s aspiration, be it an authoritarian or feudal government, communism or democracy. To him the temperament and vision of the leaders determine the success or otherwise of the government.

But some people would consider Alexandra Pope’s position to be an exercise in sterile academism. To them, democracy is the beacon of good governance. This is essentially so for two basic reasons. The first is because of the elaborate provisions it makes for the psychological appeasement of the people by way of giving them the dignity of having been given a say in deciding who does, or who does not, govern them. It is obviously with this at the back of his mind that former American President Abraham Lincoln defined democracy as a “government of the people by the people for the people.” The other reason is the checks and balances provided for leaders in a democratic setting. These make democracy the chief appeal as a form of government to many people all over the world. Hence several countries of the world are fast embracing democratic rule. It is believed that autocratic rule is archaic, barbaric and old fashioned. This was one of the basis for the Africa leaders at the 35th O.A.U Summit in the Algerian Capital of Algiers to pass an anti-coup resolution which says any government that comes to power in any African country through a coup d-etat, would be diplomatically isolated. In effect such a leader, would not be admitted as a member of O.A.U.

It is also worthy of note that with three decades of military rule (1966 – 1979) and (1983 – 1999), Nigeria has been brutalized and bastardized in the face of the outside world. In this age of democracy sweeping

through the entire world, no one is left in the doubt that military rule is an aberration and a phenomenon with more vices than virtues, if any.

There had been occasions when Nigeria's military rulers have aborted series of moves to restore Nigeria to a civilized system of governance, democracy. For example, General Yakubu Gowon refused to hand-over to civilians in 1976 as promised. On three occasions, General Ibrahim Babangida postponed handing-over to an elected government. When he finally 'stepped aside', he left the country in a mess never witnessed before in the country's history and handed the government over to an un-elected interim government. Like a pack of cards, the Interim National Government collapsed to the whims of General Abacha, who until his death was planning to succeed himself and thereby perpetuate his regime. In this circumstance, it comes as no surprise that development has been a victim of authoritarianism in Nigeria. A country whose founding fathers had work relentlessly for a Federal system of government with decentralized powers, but which the military turned into a Unitary State.

That Nigeria is long overdue for a democratic governance is not in dispute. Everyone, both old and young, civilians and military populations, except for small cabal, have since agreed on the need to restore democracy in Nigeria with utmost urgency and have fought tooth and nail in its quest.

For the new democracy to be sustainable, we must draw some lessons from the past mistakes and be able to guide against the future of the new democracy. It is with this as a motivation that Media Rights Agenda has undertaken this project: "Executive Watch". The project seeks to monitor the new government of President Obasanjo to guard against possible derailment. It is to act as a feed back to President Obasanjo on what the populace, cutting across all sections of the society, feel about his policies and decisions, and also their reaction to his statements on crucial state matters.

Media Rights Agenda was involved in activities aimed at developing integrity in the electoral process during the transition by monitoring and reporting on the prosecution of the political transition programme and as well monitoring and reporting on the media coverage of the process to determine the extent of fairness exhibited by them in giving each political party equal access to air its views. (see *Media Scorecard* and *Airwaves Scorecard*, Media Rights Agenda, (January, February, March, April, May and June, 1999)).

OBJECTIVES

That Nigerian recently passed through one its most trying periods in her political history is not debatable. With that experience in mind, and a desire to ensure the success of the present civilian democratic government, Media Rights Agenda (MRA) is undertaking to monitor some major activities and policies of President Olusegun Obasanjo the aims of which are:

- to ascertain the popularity such activities and policies enjoy among a wide spectrum of Nigerians
- to ascertain how well the government is carrying along the Nigerian people who had given all to ensure the enthronement of a civilian democratic government.

The overall objective being, not only to keep track of the President's performance and popularity, but also serve as a feed back to the government to enable it, accordingly, serve Nigerians better.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE TOPIC

On Monday 14th of February, 2000. The Federal Government launched its 'Poverty Alleviation Programme in all the states of the federation. The scheme is expected to create 200,000 jobs and would cost N10 billion. Fifty per cent of the job would go to the unemployed youths in the age bracket of (17 - 30). The remaining 50% would be shared on gender basis amongst men and women at 25% apiece.

The beneficiaries known as 'Poverty Alleviation Programme Participants' (PAPP) would draw 5,000 persons from each state and the FCT, totalling 185,000 persons. The remaining 15,000 persons are to be drawn from the trouble spots of Yenogoa, Warri, Lagos and Kano. The beneficiaries would be employed for one year on a minimum monthly wage of N3,5000.

Laudable as this project is, it could be recalled that thier is not the first time that a programme aimed at alliviating poverty would be launched in Nigeria. There has been Operation Feed the Nation by President Obasanjo during his first coming as military Head of State, Green Revolution by the civilian government of Alhaji Sheu Shagari, family Support Programme of self-styled military President General Ibrahim Babangida and Family Economic Advancement Programme of late Haed of State, General Sani Abacha.

But sadly, all these programmes did not lead to any significant alliviation in the widespread poverty afflicting the mass of Nigerians for various reasons. So, the questions then arise; what were the factors responsible for the failure of those pregrammes? What must be done to ensure that such sad fate does not befall the president Obasanjo Poverty Aliviation Programme?

METHODOLOGY

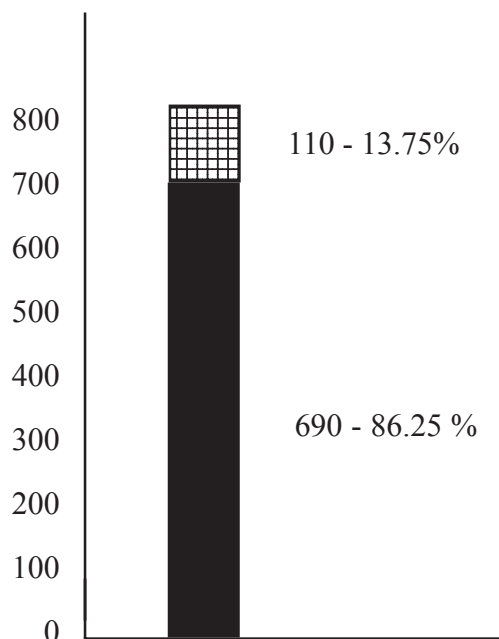
- This is the sixth report under this project and response sampling is restricted to Lagos State.
- It involves the administration of structured questionnaires of six questions.
- The sample comprises 800 respondents aged between 18 years and above both male and female.
- The sample is made up of three sub-groups of persons which include people with non-formal education /those who attained primary school level, post-primary school level, and post-secondary school level.
- The three sub-groups are represented in the sample in the ratio of 200, 250 and 350 respectively in the questionnair,
- The sub-group of non-formal education/primary school level was assisted by MRA's researchers to read and interpret the questions and elect appropriate options according to the preferences of the respondents concerned.

PRESENTATION OF RESULT

ACHIEVED SAMPLE

Sample sizes Sample groups	Nos of questionnaires administered	Nos of questionnaires recieved and %	Nos of questionnaires not received and %
Non formal/primary school level	200	150 75%	50 25%
Post primary education	250	210 84%	40 16%
Post secondary education	350	330 94.3 %	20 5.7%
Grand Total	Cummulative % 800	Cummulative % 690 86.25%	Cummulative % 117 13.75%

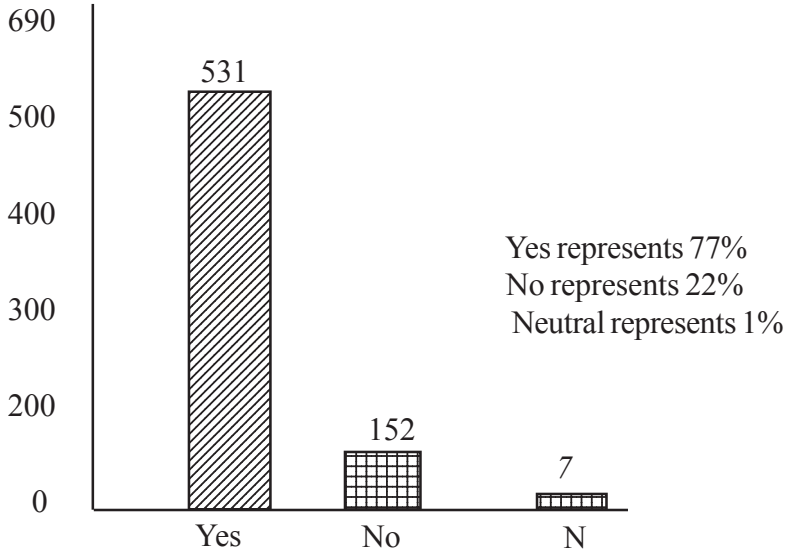
QUESTIONNAIRE RATE OF RETURN / MORTALITY



Q1a. Do you consider the launching of the ‘National Poverty Alleviation Programme’ a welcome development?

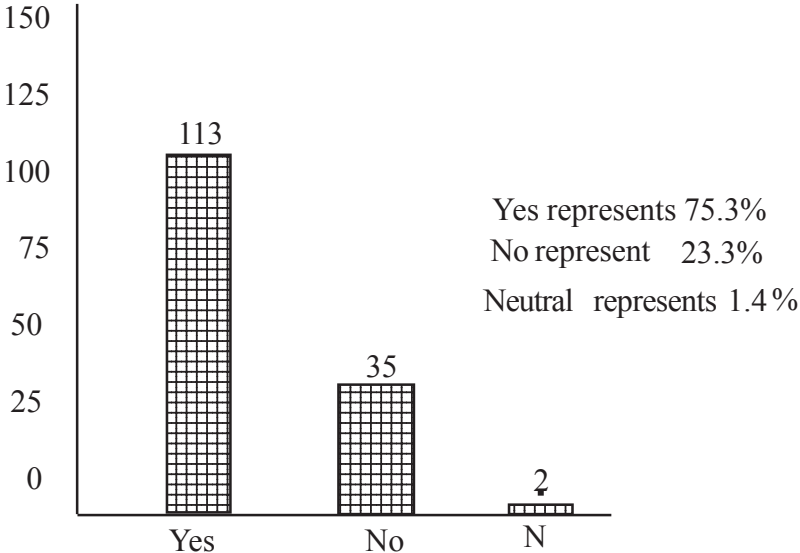
Yes(I do.)
No (I do not.)

AGGREGATE RESPONSE

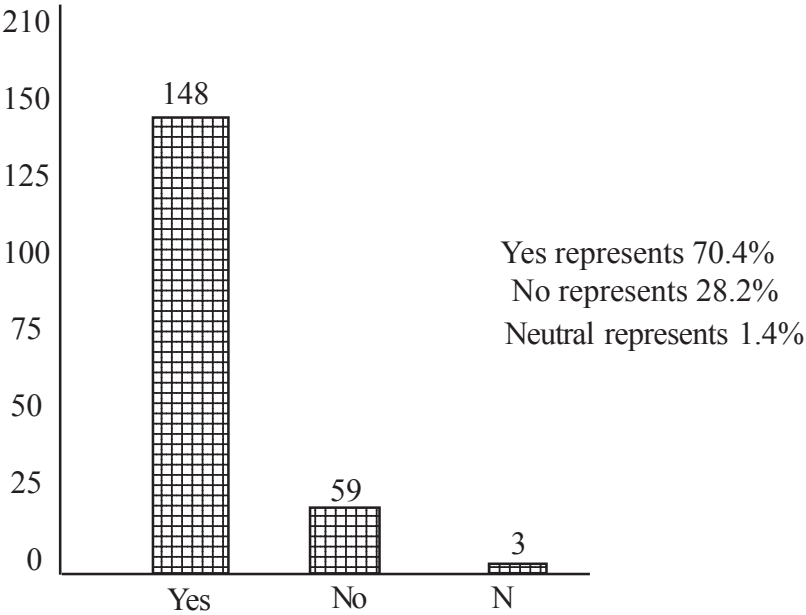


SUB GROUP RESPONSE

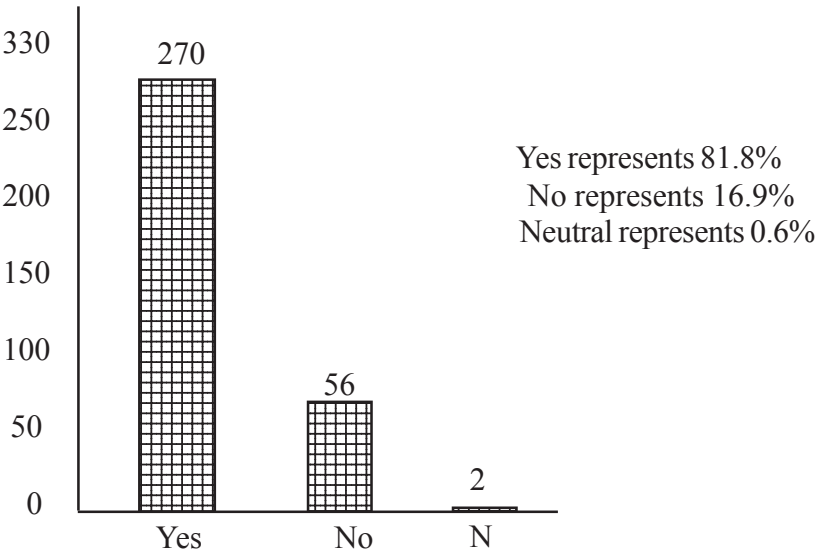
Non Formal/Primary Education



Secondary Education



Post Secondary Education



Q1b. If your answer to question one is No, state your reason?

.....

AGGREGATE RESPONSES **FREQUENCY**

REASONS

1.	It will be politized and lead to favouritism .	24
2.	It will lead to corruption	30
3.	The problem of ghost names will be rampant.	29
4.	Participants will be jobless again at the end of a year term	12
5.	The time frame of one year is too short for the programme	12
6.	Higher school leavers are exempted.	12
7.	The three thousand five hundred naira salary is too small	12
8.	The age limit will encourage people to lie about their age to qualify	6
9.	It is not profit oriented	5

Q2. In the past years, similar programmes have been embarked upon by various government, directed at eliminating poverty and unemployment in Nigeria. Examples are the ‘Operation Feed the Nation’ (OFN), by Obasanjo military regime, ‘Green Revolution’ by Alhaji Shehu Shagari’s administration and the ‘Structural Adjustment Programme’ (SAP) by the General Ibrahim Babangida regime. In your own opinion, what factors were responsible for the collapse of these programme?

.....

AGGREGATE RESPONSES **FREQUENCY**

FACTORS

1.	Lack of consistency in government policies and implementation	210
2.	Corruption	181
3.	Bad governance	105
4.	Unstable political climate	56
5.	Inadequate publicity	48
6.	None availability of effective monitoring unit for the programme	36
7.	Lack of dedication on the part of the beneficiaries	27
8.	Vandalization and cases of theft of government properties and equipments	20

Q3. What modifications would you suggest for the implementation of the PAP so as not to suffer the fate of the past programmes?

AGGREGATE RESPONSES **FREQUENCY**

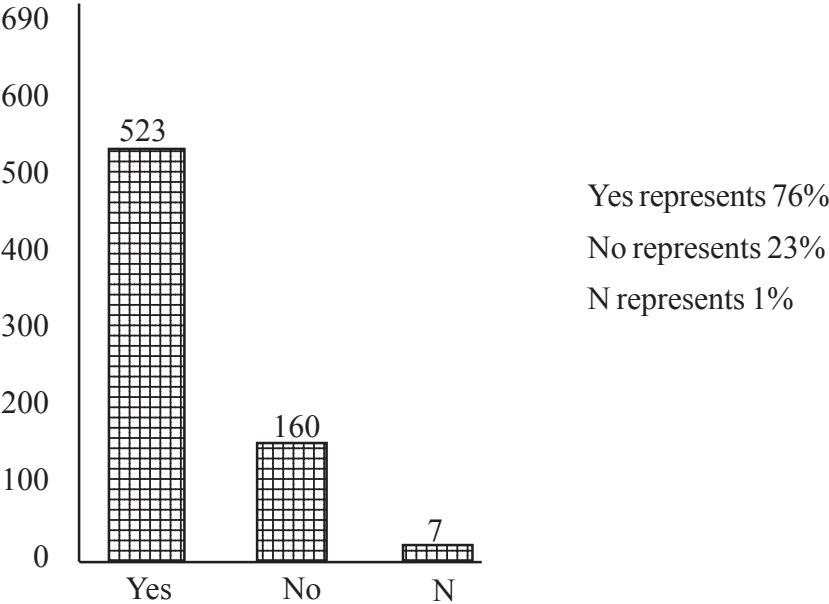
MODIFICATIONS

1.	It should be monitored at local, state and federal level	258
2.	An enabling political and economic environment	78
3.	Long term planing and good imlementation	75
4.	It should be organised transparently	63
5.	Adequate publicity	49
6.	Government should fund it well	45
7.	Beneficiaries should sign a bond of good behaviour and produced guarantors	39
8.	The programme should be profit oriented to avoid premature death	34
9.	The time frame of one year should be extended to a longer period	15
10.	Encourage private and foreign participation	15
11.	The programme should be extended to University graduate	12

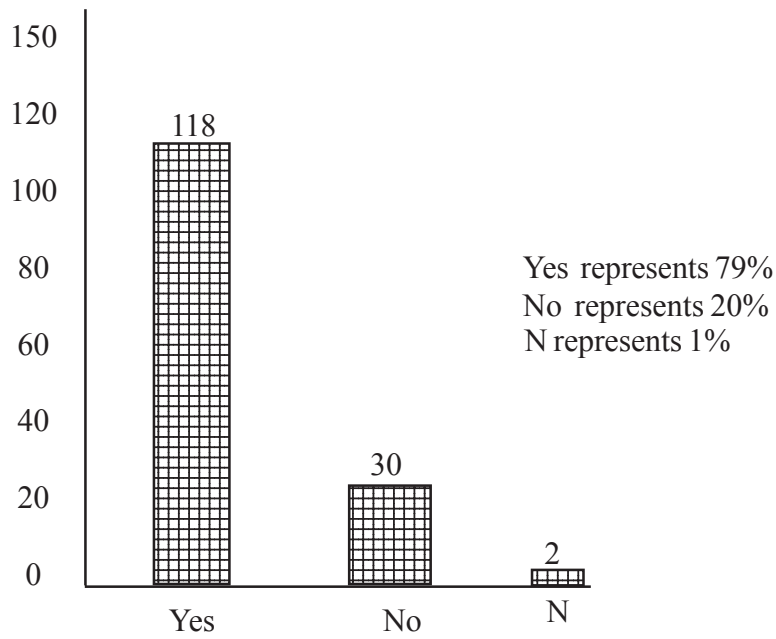
Q4. Interested candidates have been urged to go and register in their variours Local Governments. Do you not see the programme being politicized and leading to conflicts between the ruling party in each of the states and their opposition party?

Yes or No

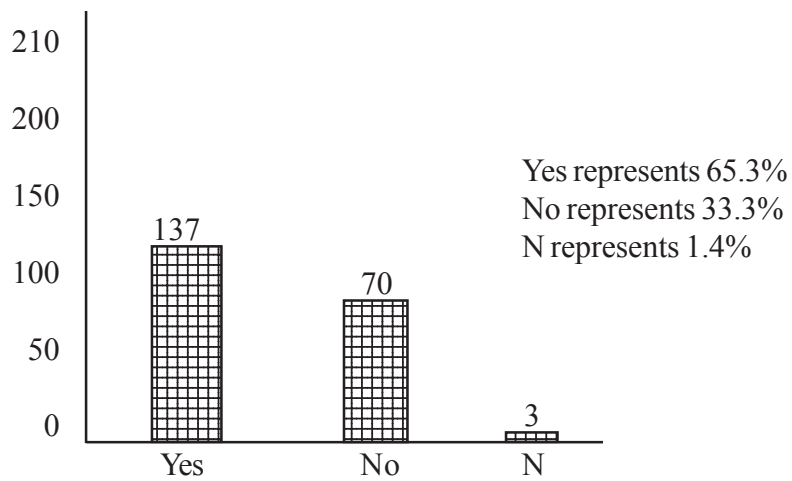
AGGREGATE RESPONSE



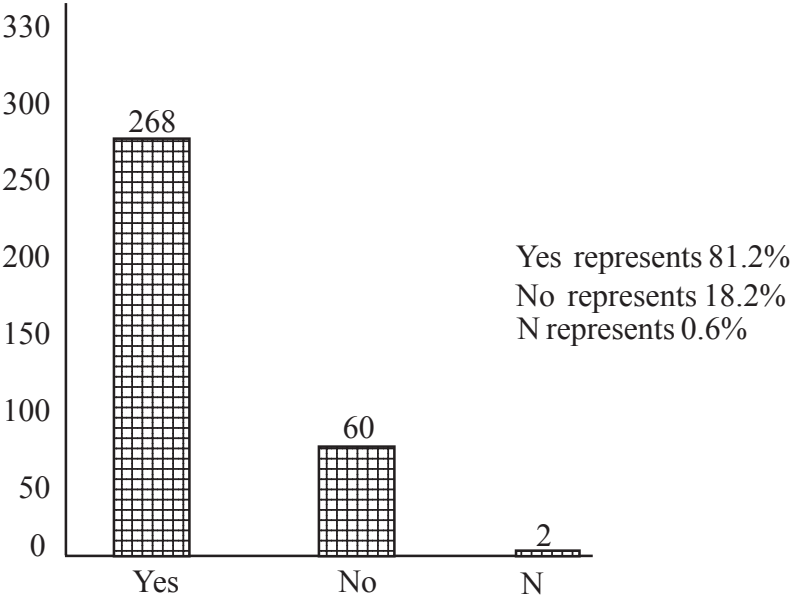
No Formal/Primary Education



Secondary Education

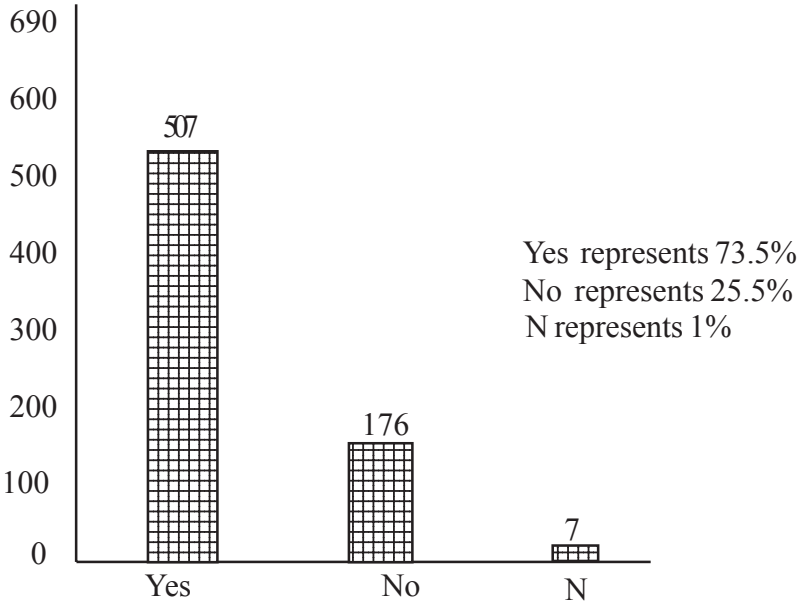


Post Secondary Education

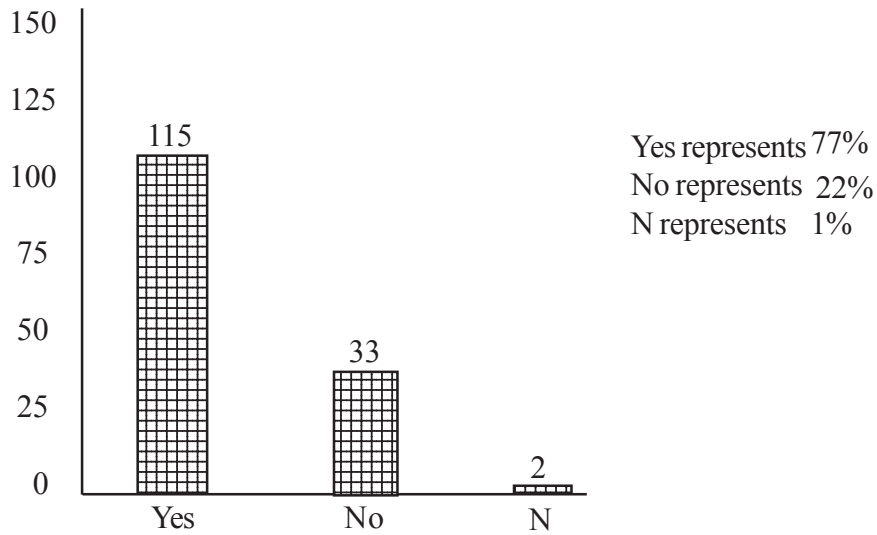


Q5. Judging by the teeming polulation of unemployed persons in Nigerians, do you see the recruitment of 5,000 persons from each state for one year, as a solution to the social vices and tension which have become prevalent in the Nigerian Nation.

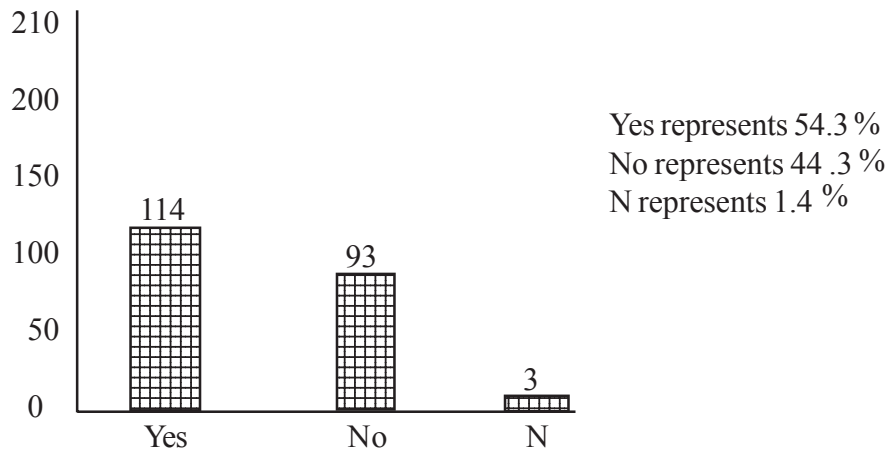
AGGREGATE RESPONSE



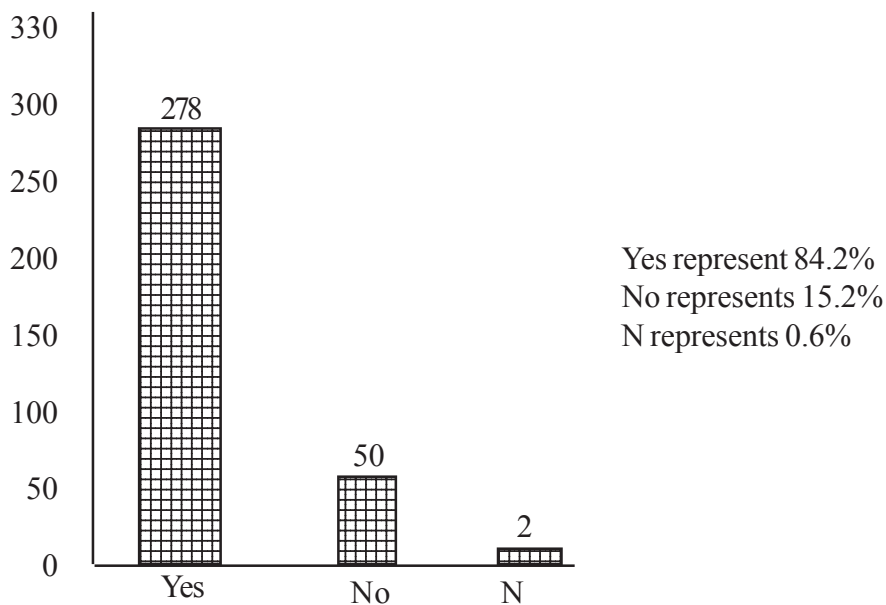
Primary/ Non Formal Education



Secondary Education



Post Secondary Education

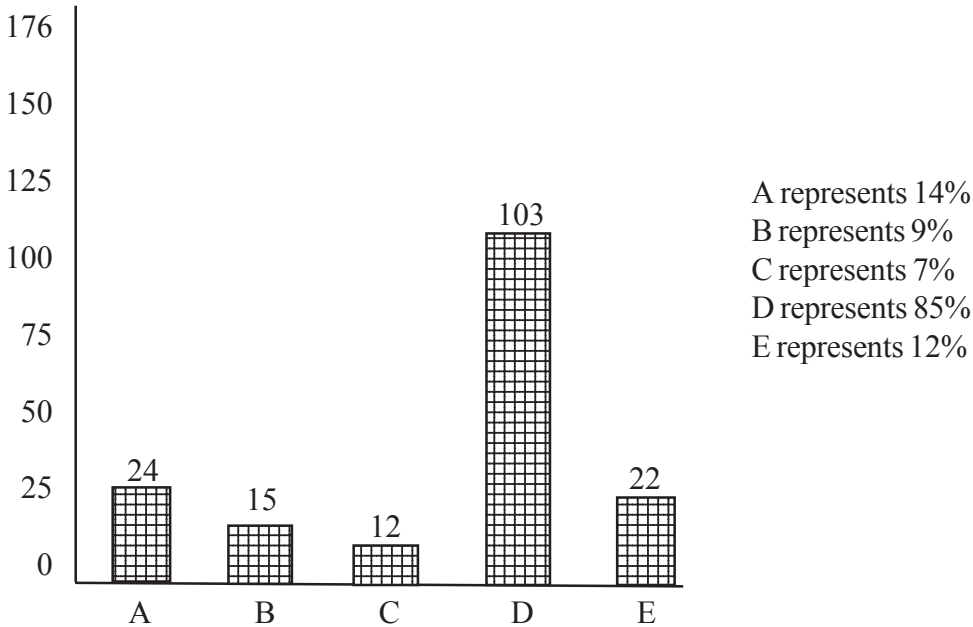


Q6a. If your answer to Q5 is “No” suggest the number of participants the government should recruit for the programme in each state of the Federaton and the duration?

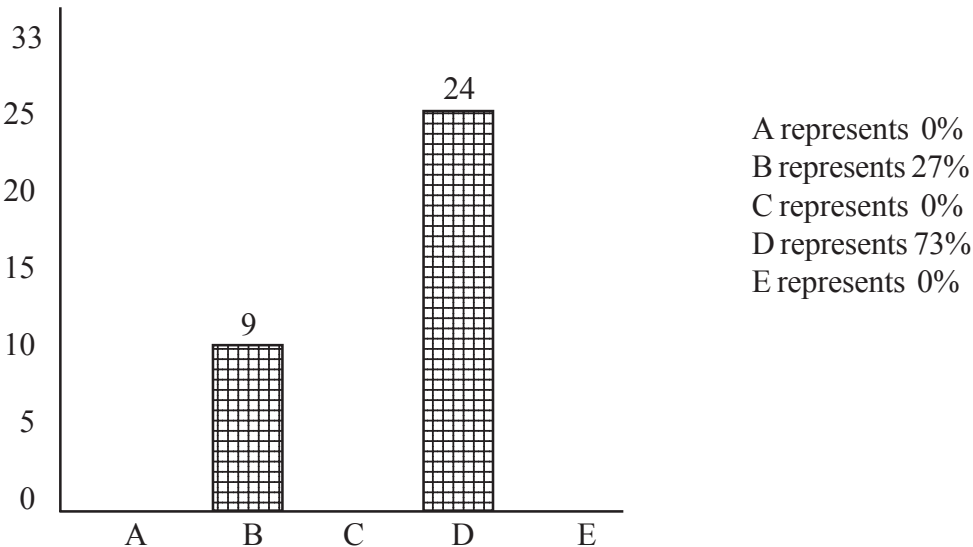
A. NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

- a. 10,000
- b. 20,000
- c. 50,000
- d. 100,000
- e. Any other (specify)

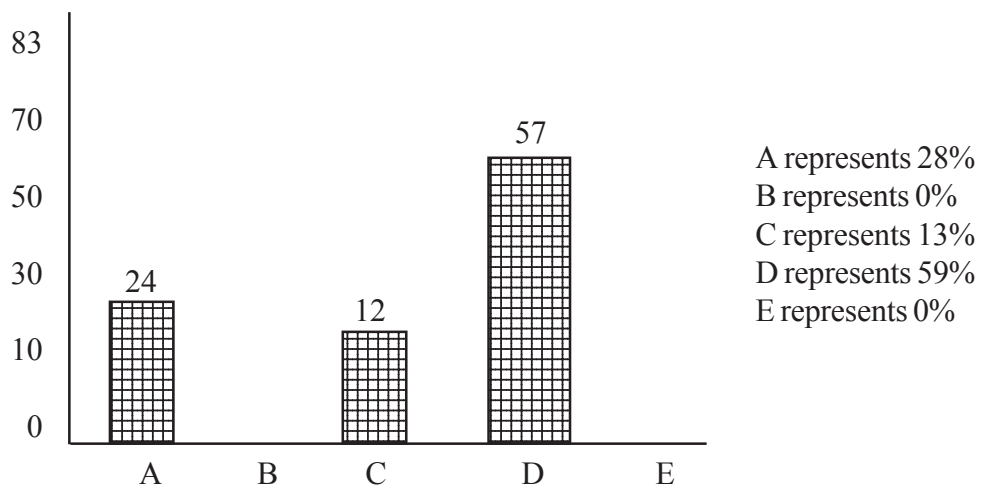
AGGREGATE RESPONSE



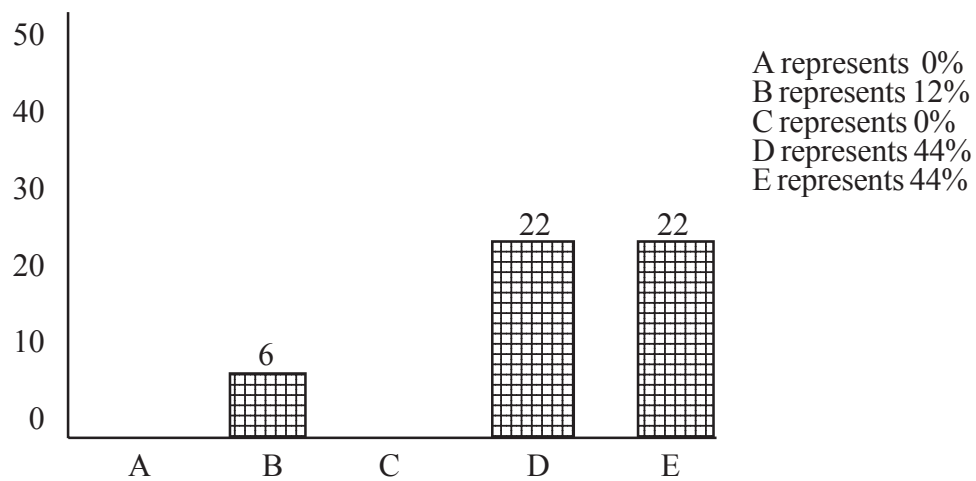
Primary Education



Secondary Education



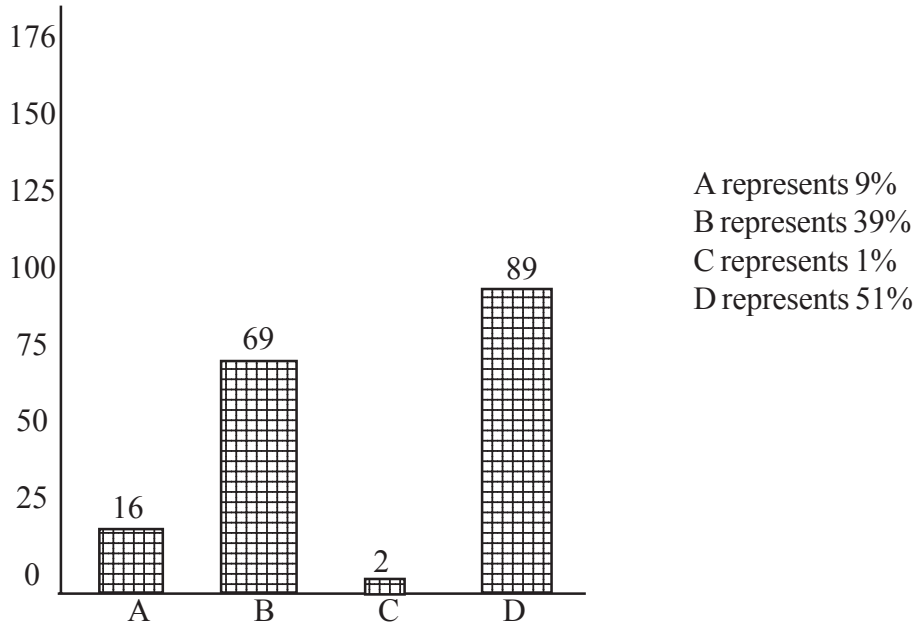
Post Secondary Education



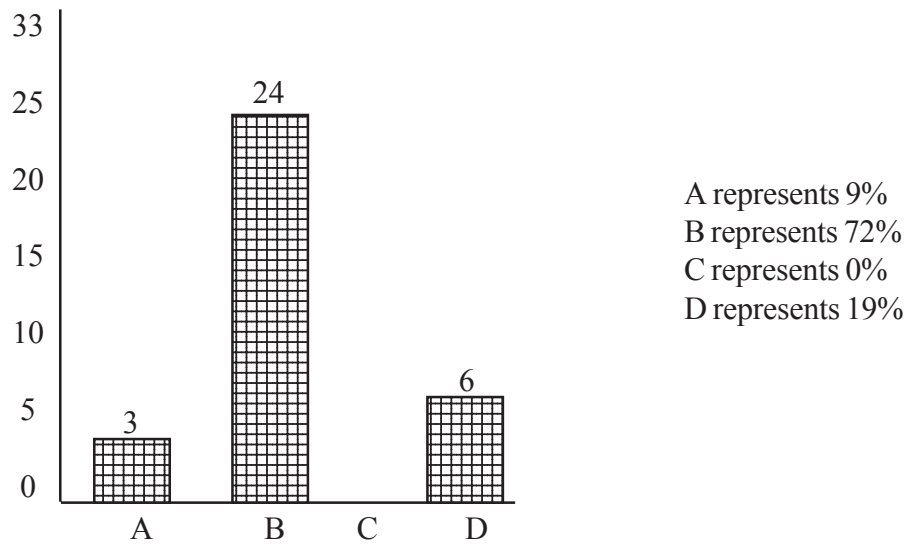
Q6b. DURATION

- a. 2 years
- b. 5 years
- c. 10 years
- d. Any other (specify)

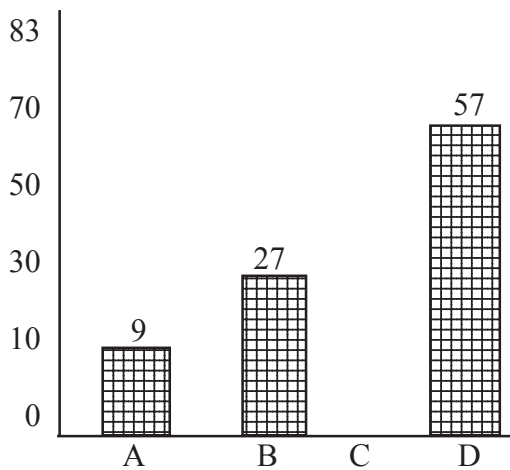
AGGREGATE RESPONSE



Non Formal/Primary Education



Secondary Education





Media Rights Agenda (MRA) is an independent, non-governmental organisation established for the purpose of promoting and protecting press freedom and freedom of expression in Nigeria. The MRA is registered under Nigerian law and has Observer Status with the African Commission on Human and People's Rights. MRA's Aims and Objectives are:

- a. to promote respect and recognition for press freedom and freedom of expression in Nigeria;
- b. to provide protection and support for journalists and writers engaged in the lawful pursuit of their professional duties;
- c. to promote the highest standards of professional ethics, integrity, training and conduct in the journalism profession; and
- d. to bring about a conducive social and legal atmosphere for the practice of journalism, and ensure the protection of the journalist's right not to be compelled to work against his or her conviction or disclose confidential sources of information.

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