



## *Youth Empowerment and Social Orientation: Policy Roadmap for Nigeria's Sustainable Food Security*

### **Pemberdayaan Pemuda dan Orientasi Sosial: Peta Jalan Kebijakan Ketahanan Pangan Berkelanjutan Nigeria**

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#### Abstract

*Nigeria currently faces a critical structural paradox: immense agrarian potential is heavily overshadowed by severe food insecurity and high youth unemployment rates. Current state interventions, notably the N-Power program, consistently fail to provide structural exit strategies, operating merely as temporary symptom relief. Furthermore, deep sociocultural distortions alienate youths from agriculture, driving them toward the shadow economy. This study rigorously evaluates these institutional deficits and proposes a comprehensive policy roadmap. Employing a qualitative public policy analysis alongside a systematic literature review, this research actively synthesizes the Conceptual Triple E Model with prosocial orientation reforms. The findings reveal that addressing the agricultural crisis requires mitigating cognitive deficits through civic literacy, followed by smart vocational training and structural empowerment via land tenure redistribution. Ultimately, achieving sustainable food sovereignty and capitalizing on the demographic dividend mandates a holistic public policy framework that transforms destructive mentalities into a modernized agrarian work ethic for national development.*

#### Abstrak

Nigeria saat ini sedang menghadapi sebuah paradoks struktural yang kritis: potensi agraris besar sangat dibayangi oleh krisis kerawanan pangan parah dan tingkat pengangguran pemuda yang tinggi. Intervensi negara saat ini, terutama program N-Power, secara konsisten gagal memberikan strategi keluar struktural, hanya beroperasi sebagai peredaan gejala sementara. Selanjutnya, distorsi sosiokultural mendalam mengasingkan pemuda dari pertanian, mendorong mereka menuju ekonomi bayangan. Studi ini secara sangat ketat mengevaluasi defisit kelembagaan tersebut dan mengusulkan peta jalan kebijakan komprehensif. Menerapkan analisis kebijakan publik kualitatif bersama tinjauan pustaka sistematis, penelitian ini secara aktif menyintesis Model Konseptual Triple E dengan reformasi orientasi prososial. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa penanganan krisis pertanian membutuhkan mitigasi defisit kognitif melalui literasi kewargaan, diikuti oleh pelatihan vokasi cerdas dan pemberdayaan struktural melalui redistribusi kepemilikan lahan. Pada akhirnya, pencapaian kedaulatan pangan berkelanjutan dan kapitalisasi pada bonus demografi mengamanatkan kerangka kebijakan publik holistik yang mengubah mentalitas destruktif menjadi etos kerja agraris modern untuk pembangunan nasional inklusif.



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## **A. INTRODUCTION**

### **1. Background**

Securing robust food systems serves as a foundational prerequisite for sociopolitical stability, national sovereignty, and sustained economic growth. This imperative is explicitly institutionalized within the global framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), primarily through the mandate of SDG 2 (Zero Hunger). Despite this formalized commitment, the contemporary international food security architecture currently confronts profound structural disruptions. Within this volatile context, developing nations in Sub-Saharan Africa disproportionately endure the most acute and escalating vulnerabilities.<sup>1</sup> Against this backdrop of systemic instability, the Federal Republic of Nigeria presents a compelling case study that epitomizes a profound developmental paradox. Empirical assessments corroborate the severity of this crisis; the nation was relegated to the 107th position among 113 assessed countries in the Global Food Security Index (GFSI), while simultaneously ranking 109th out of 125 nations in the 2023 Global Hunger Index (GHI).<sup>2</sup> This structural contradiction manifests most starkly when juxtaposed against the country's inherent capacity: despite possessing immense natural resource wealth and expansive arable territories, the nation is grappling with a projected trajectory where upwards of 26.5 million citizens face the imminent threat of acute food insecurity in 2024.<sup>3</sup>

This pervasive food insecurity precipitates direct and deleterious consequences for macro-level public health outcomes. Epidemiological evidence underscores the severity of this emergency: within disproportionately affected administrative jurisdictions, notably Niger State, nutritional assessments among children under five reveal a stunting prevalence of 47.4%, alongside underweight and wasting rates of 32.7% and 22.6%, respectively.<sup>4</sup> Viewed through the lens of public policy, this systemic failure cannot be exclusively attributed to exogenous shocks, such as climate-induced anomalies or global

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<sup>1</sup> Nadezhda Anatolyevna Goncharova and Natalia Vadimovna Merzlyakova, "Food Shortages and Hunger as a Global Problem," *Food Science and Technology* 42 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1590/fst.70621>.

<sup>2</sup> The Economist Newspaper Limited 2022, "Global Food Security Index 2022," The Economist Newspaper Limited 2022, 2022, <https://impact.economist.com/sustainability/project/food-security-index/>.

<sup>3</sup> Catherine Omeriyang Madu and Alexander Uzochukwu Ogbunugwor, "Youth Participation in Agriculture for Sustainable Food Security in Nigeria," *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation* 12, no. 10 (November 11, 2025): 1698–1705, <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSL.2025.1210000149>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibrahim Abdulwaliyu et al., "Conceptual Triple E Model for Sustainable Food Security: A Solution-Based Framework for Hunger and Malnutrition in Nigeria," *World Nutrition* 14, no. 4 (December 2023): 56–62, <https://doi.org/10.26596/wn.202314456-62>.

market volatility. Rather, the crisis is fundamentally entrenched in severe governance deficits and an antiquated national agricultural policy architecture. At present, the nation's agrarian sector is *de facto* sustained by an aging demographic engaged predominantly in subsistence farming, characterized by a severely constrained capacity for technological adoption. Conversely, the youth cohort theoretically positioned to serve as the engine of economic expansion remains starkly alienated from this critical sector.

To redress these governance failures, contemporary public policy discourse has increasingly pivoted its interventionary focus toward capitalizing on the nation's demographic dividend. The youth cohort (typically comprising individuals aged 18 to 35) possesses the transformative capacity requisite for accelerating technological adoption and operationalizing climate-smart agriculture (CSA) frameworks. Nevertheless, the systematic integration of this demographic into agricultural value chains remains severely impeded by deeply entrenched sociocultural and institutional distortions. Agrarian labor is persistently stigmatized as an occupation of last resort, offering negligible prospects for upward vertical social mobility. This pervasive occupational prejudice has consequentially accelerated a massive out-migration phenomenon, exacerbating the rural-to-urban drift. Driven by acute economic marginalization and subsequent normative disorientation, a substantial proportion of these displaced youths are increasingly absorbed into the shadow economy. Most notably, this manifests in widespread participation in transnational cybercrime networks, colloquially recognized within the Nigerian context as the 'Yahoo Yahoo' syndicates.<sup>5</sup> It is precisely at this critical juncture that structured social reorientation policies encompassing civic literacy, prosocial engagement, and the ethical imperatives of sustainable development must function as institutional catalysts. Such policy interventions are requisite to fundamentally recalibrate youth paradigms, thereby realigning their socio-economic aspirations toward the reprioritization of national food security objectives.<sup>6</sup>

To situate this policy intervention within the broader academic discourse, the contemporary literature examining the nexus of food security and youth empowerment across the African continent can be broadly delineated into three primary paradigmatic trajectories. The initial strand predominantly centers on mechanistic and technologically

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<sup>5</sup> Madu and Ogbunugwor, "Youth Participation in Agriculture for Sustainable Food Security in Nigeria."

<sup>6</sup> Nikolaos Stylos and Victoria Bellou, "Generation Alpha in the Marketplace and Workplace: A Research Agenda," *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* 38, no. 1 (January 6, 2026): 1-26, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-05-2025-0726>.

driven empowerment frameworks. Exemplifying this approach, empirical work by Abdulwaliyu et al. postulates the 'Conceptual Triple E Model' comprising Evaluation, Education, and Empowerment as an operational mechanism designed to mitigate food insecurity via precision agricultural instruction,<sup>7</sup> this paradigm is further substantiated by the empirical findings of Brouwer et al., whose evaluation of the ENABLE-TAAT initiative demonstrates significant programmatic efficacy. Specifically, their analysis reveals that the strategic integration of technological literacy within this framework catalyzed a 75% augmentation in measured food security outcomes.<sup>8</sup> The second analytical trajectory directs critical scrutiny toward macro-level governance frameworks and state fiscal interventions. Exemplifying this critique, the analytical assessment conducted by Afolabi et al. contends that the federal government's flagship social safety net intervention the N-Power program has systematically failed to yield enduring youth empowerment. The authors explicitly attribute this programmatic deficit to the structural omission of viable graduation pathways.<sup>9</sup> This systemic institutional deficit is highly congruent with the theoretical postulates articulated by Mukombwe et al., who assert that the operationalization of food security objectives (SDG 2) remains fundamentally unattainable decoupled from the establishment of robust, transparent, and equitable public institutional architectures (SDG 16).<sup>10</sup> Conversely, the third analytical strand accentuates the critical imperative of sociological dimensions. Within this context, empirical evidence presented by Charlyn et al. firmly establishes that functional education, coupled with targeted social orientation, constitutes an indispensable precondition. These socio-cognitive elements are strictly requisite for both the amelioration of entrenched structural poverty and the optimal leveraging of national resource endowments.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Abdulwaliyu et al., "Conceptual Triple E Model for Sustainable Food Security: A Solution-Based Framework for Hunger and Malnutrition in Nigeria."

<sup>8</sup> Inge D. Brouwer, John McDermott, and Ruerd Ruben, "Food Systems Everywhere: Improving Relevance in Practice," *Global Food Security* 26 (September 2020): 100398, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gfs.2020.100398>.

<sup>9</sup> Israel Toba Afolabi, Samuel Chukwudi Agunyai, and Hofisi Costa, "Nigeria's N-Power Initiative and Youth Empowerment," *International Journal of Professional Business Review* 10, no. 9 (September 2025): e05664, <https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2025.v10i9.5664>.

<sup>10</sup> James S. Mukombwe, Andrea du Toit, and Sheryl L. Hendriks, "Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions," in *Handbook on Public Policy and Food Security* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2024), Page, 6-13. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781839105449.00041>.

<sup>11</sup> Udom Aadaeze Charlyn, Daniel Esemé Gberevbíe, and Goddy Uwa Osimen, "Fostering National Development in Nigeria: The Interplay Between Education and Social Orientation," *Journal of Educational and Social Research* 15, no. 2 (March 2025): 137, <https://doi.org/10.36941/jesr-2025-0048>.

While preceding scholarship establishes a robust empirical foundation, a pronounced critical lacuna persists within the literature: technocratic agricultural analyses predominantly circumvent the underlying moral-cognitive crisis, whereas pedagogical reorientation frameworks are seldom operationalized within highly specific economic sectors. Addressing this theoretical divergence, the primary contribution (novelty) of this policy paper resides in its transdisciplinary conceptual synthesis. This article bridges sociocultural determinants specifically, the cultivation of prosocial character to mitigate cyber-criminality with structural-economic imperatives, actualized through the Triple E agrarian empowerment framework.

The central proposition advanced herein argues that absent a systematic social reorientation policy designed to rehabilitate the destructive 'Yahoo Yahoo' mentality into a productive agrarian ethos, state-led capital injections and technological dissemination will inevitably precipitate profound inefficiencies. Such technocratic interventions, operating within a socio-normative vacuum, risk exacerbating human capital waste and driving economic recidivism a systemic pathology starkly evident in the structural failures of the N-Power initiative.

Ultimately, this analysis seeks to delineate an inclusive, applied public policy roadmap. Core findings from this investigation validate that the realization of national food security objectives necessitates a sequentially executed institutional recalibration. This trajectory must commence with the systematic internalization of civic literacy to fundamentally restructure youth occupational preferences. This foundational normative shift must subsequently be coupled with targeted vocational instruction in precision agribusiness. Finally, the framework culminates in robust state regulatory interventions specifically the codification of secure land tenure and the expansion of comprehensive financial inclusion serving as indispensable structural safeguards for domestic producers navigating the volatile global market.

## **2. Research Questions**

The complex intersection of acute food insecurity and escalating youth unemployment in Nigeria engenders a public policy paradox, one that necessitates rigorous structural and institutional evaluation. The persistent underperformance of various state-led interventionist frameworks strongly indicates profound deficits in both institutional architecture design and policy formulation. Grounded in the preceding empirical landscape and theoretical discourse, this study endeavors to bridge the

established literature lacuna by advancing three primary analytical inquiries:

- a. To what extent does the contemporary youth empowerment policy architecture specifically the N-Power initiative either mitigate or inadvertently reproduce structural failures within Nigeria's food security ecosystem, particularly when critically examined through the theoretical lenses of Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) and the Capability Approach?
- b. How effectively can institutional engineering specifically the integration of prosocial orientation as a structural antithesis to the instant-wealth economy and cybercriminal pathologies mitigate the entrenched sociocultural barriers that persistently alienate the youth cohort from the modernized agricultural sector?
- c. In what manner can the Triple E (Evaluation, Education, and Empowerment) conceptual framework be coherently synthesized with a prosocial pedagogical reform agenda to construct an inclusive, applied public policy roadmap capable of advancing the interconnected targets of SDG 2 and SDG 16?

This tripartite problem formulation is deliberately constructed in a sequential trajectory: commencing with a critical baseline evaluation of existing policy frameworks (RQ1), progressing toward the examination of targeted sociocultural interventions (RQ2), and culminating in the formulation of structured policy design recommendations (RQ3). Consequently, this overarching methodological sequence will rigorously guide the ensuing comparative analysis and thematic synthesis within this manuscript.

### **3. Research Method**

This investigation employs a qualitative research design, operationalized through a public policy analysis framework that is synergistically integrated with a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology. The adoption of this macro-structural approach is fundamentally predicated upon the critical imperative to rigorously evaluate, and subsequently reconstruct, the regulatory architectures and sociopolitical dynamics governing Nigeria's food security ecosystem. Consequently, data acquisition is strictly anchored in the extraction of secondary data, systematically sourced from internationally recognized academic repositories alongside authoritative reports from multilateral institutions.

To satisfy rigorous standards of methodological traceability and epistemological validity, the SLR protocol incorporates highly precise inclusion criteria. Literature

retrieval within the Scopus database was deliberately constrained to a contemporary five-year publication window, utilizing the following advanced Boolean search syntax: ("youth empowerment" OR "N-Power") AND ("food security" OR "Triple E model") AND ("social orientation" OR "civic literacy") AND "Nigeria". Articles designated for inclusion were strictly mandated to originate from peer-reviewed, high-reputation journals, verifiable via active Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs). Furthermore, authoritative textual references underpinning the institutional theoretical foundations of this study necessitate precise pagination citations. This stringent requirement is deliberately implemented to guarantee the exacting accuracy and verifiable integrity of all advanced policy propositions.<sup>12</sup>

The analytical phase of this investigation is operationalized through a rigorously structured, multidimensional thematic synthesis paradigm. Following a stringent curation protocol, the definitive data corpus was systematically delineated into three primary macro-analytical clusters: (a) institutional design pathologies intrinsic to the governance of agrarian interventionist frameworks; (b) socio-psychological determinants and normative behavioral disruptions afflicting the youth cohort; and (c) sustainable food security institutional architectures anchored within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) mandate.

This thematic evaluation is methodologically substantiated through the theoretical triangulation of contemporary public policy paradigms. Specifically, Human Capital Theory, deployed in tandem with the Conceptual Triple E Model (Evaluation, Education, and Empowerment) instrument, serves as the primary evaluative mechanism to rigorously gauge the systemic utility of functional agribusiness instruction.<sup>13</sup> In a complementary vein, the efficacy of post-intervention agency expansion and the subsequent consolidation of youth economic autonomy are rigorously assessed through the theoretical framework of Amartya Sen's Capability Approach.

To establish a robust empirical baseline for this evaluation, the present inquiry strategically anchors its analysis upon the extant literature deconstructing the systemic failures of the N-Power initiative, explicitly positioning these critical assessments as the central comparative benchmark,<sup>14</sup> these empirical insights are subsequently synthesized

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<sup>12</sup> Mukombwe, du Toit, and Hendriks, "Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions." Page, 371.

<sup>13</sup> Abdulwaliyu et al., "Conceptual Triple E Model for Sustainable Food Security: A Solution-Based Framework for Hunger and Malnutrition in Nigeria."

<sup>14</sup> Afolabi, Agunyai, and Costa, "Nigeria's N-Power Initiative and Youth Empowerment."

with the burgeoning literature concerning the integration of prosocial social orientations within educational systems. By employing a cross-national comparative methodology of policy initiatives, the viability of the formulated draft roadmap is rigorously tested for reliability. This procedural validation is executed prior to its final presentation as a set of strategic recommendations tailored for the deliberative consideration of policymakers.

## **B. DISCUSSION**

### **1. The Landscape of Youth Empowerment Policy and the Structural Deficits of Food Security**

This preliminary analysis is designed to deconstruct the systemic anomalies inherent in Nigeria's food security landscape, which, paradoxically, coexist with a vast and growing productive-age population. Viewed through the lens of public policy concerning demographic transitions, Nigeria is currently positioned within a 'demographic window of opportunity.' However, the agricultural sector which has historically contributed a substantial share to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is confronting a state of acute stagnation. A decade-long longitudinal analysis of time-series data indicates that this stagnation correlates directly with a profound reluctance among the youth cohort to participate in the agrarian economy. Consequently, the sector remains dominated by an aging demographic of subsistence farmers characterized by minimal digital literacy, a reliance on conventional cultivation techniques, and diminished resilience against intensifying climate anomalies.<sup>15</sup>

As a direct corollary of this precipitous decline in agrarian productive capacity, national food stability has undergone a systemic disintegration. Far from representing a transient fluctuation, this crisis has become deeply endemic within the national socio-economic fabric. Empirical estimates suggest that approximately 60% of the Nigerian citizenry is currently ensnared below the threshold of extreme poverty. This pervasive socio-economic precariousness culminates in a macro-level public health emergency; notably, upwards of two million children under the age of five are confronted by the imminent threat of acute malnutrition an existential risk that fundamentally jeopardizes the nation's future cognitive capital.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> T. O. Ojo, L.J. S. Baiyegunhi, and A. O. Salami, "Impact of Credit Demand on the Productivity of Rice Farmers in South West Nigeria," *Journal of Economics and Behavioral Studies* 11, no. 1(J) (March 10, 2019): 166–80, [https://doi.org/10.22610/jeps.v11i1\(J\).2757](https://doi.org/10.22610/jeps.v11i1(J).2757).

<sup>16</sup> Goncharova and Merzlyakova, "Food Shortages and Hunger as a Global Problem."

In response to escalating labor deficits and the pervasive nature of rural impoverishment, the Nigerian Federal Government inaugurated a suite of large-scale employment initiatives, with the N-Power scheme serving as its central flagship. The architecture of this initiative aimed to attenuate surging youth unemployment—which eclipsed 7.2% in 2023 by facilitating transient work placements, vocational upskilling, and the provision of monthly fiscal stipends. Nevertheless, a rigorous critique grounded in institutional governance reveals fundamental design flaws within this policy framework. Operationally, N-Power functions primarily as a superficial, symptom-relief mechanism. Analyzed through a political economy lens, these cash-transfer instruments are heavily imbricated with the logic of electoral patronage; the state demonstrably circumvents the complexities of structural reform such as the redistribution of agrarian land rights currently monopolized by local oligarchies opting instead for short-term populist expedients to secure youth-based political allegiances.<sup>17</sup>

This systemic failure becomes acutely quantifiable when scrutinized through the prism of the Capability Approach, as pioneered by Amartya Sen. Within this normative framework, Sen posits that the legitimacy of public policy interventions is strictly contingent upon their capacity to broaden an individual's 'substantive freedoms' (real freedoms). For an intervention to be truly transformative, it must facilitate long-term self-reliance rather than merely dispensing ephemeral economic utility.<sup>18</sup> While the N-Power initiative demonstrated a modicum of success in mobilizing youth via administrative placements and the disbursement of transient fiscal stipends conceptually classified as 'functionings' it fundamentally faltered in its strategic objective to expand substantive agency. Upon the conclusion of the program, the state's involvement dissipated, leaving a structural vacuum characterized by the absence of viable graduation pathways or facilitated access to agrarian capital. Empirical findings underscore a devastating cycle of economic recidivism: a post-mortem policy evaluation indicates that upwards of 65% of beneficiaries regressed into the ranks of 'discouraged workers' within a mere twelve-month window following the cessation of their service.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Daniel Egiegba Agbiboa, "Between Corruption and Development: The Political Economy of State Robbery in Nigeria," *Journal of Business Ethics* 108, no. 3 (July 3, 2012): 325–45, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-011-1093-5>.

<sup>18</sup> Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Page 87-89.

<sup>19</sup> Afolabi, Agunyai, and Costa, "Nigeria's N-Power Initiative and Youth Empowerment."

To accurately calibrate the magnitude of N-Power’s institutional pathologies, it is imperative to benchmark its outcomes against more holistically designed public policy interventions often cited as regional best practices. Within the domestic landscape, the ENABLE-TAAT (Empowering Novel Agri-Business-Led Employment) initiative has proven significantly more robust. By synergistically integrating precision technological training, sustained business mentorship, and facilitated microcredit access, ENABLE-TAAT successfully catalyzed a 7% increase in real youth income while bolstering individual food security metrics by a substantial 75%.<sup>20</sup> From a cross-national perspective, Nigeria’s policy frameworks lag significantly behind the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in Ethiopia. The PSNP distinguishes itself by transcending the provision of transient, labor-intensive employment; instead, it prioritizes the construction of ecological resilience infrastructure most notably conservation terracing. These environmental interventions are systematically tethered to structured graduation pathways, which are operationalized through the strategic transfer of livestock assets and high-yielding seed capital.<sup>21</sup> The comparative structural efficacy of these divergent policy instruments is synthesized within the following evaluation matrix:

**Table 1. Evaluative Assessment of Public Policy Frameworks for Youth Empowerment and Agribusiness**

<b>Policy Initiative Name</b>	<b>Primary Orientation and Programmatic Design</b>	<b>Empirical Findings &amp; Structural Impact</b>	<b>Public Policy Paradigmatic Evaluation</b>
<b>N-Power (Nigeria)</b>	Temporary social safety net; cross-sectoral public work placement; provision of monthly fiscal stipends.	Failed to secure permanent youth integration. Post-program economic recidivism exceeded 65% due to systemic land tenure exclusions.	A symptom-relief mechanism lacking a viable exit strategy. Skewed toward short-term electoral patronage rather than systemic structural reform.

<sup>20</sup> Brouwer, McDermott, and Ruben, “Food Systems Everywhere: Improving Relevance in Practice.”

<sup>21</sup> Mari Young adults not in education, employment, or training (NEET): a global scoping review Gunnes et al., “Young Adults Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET): A Global Scoping Review,” *BMC Public Health* 25, no. 1 (October 8, 2025): 3394, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-025-24781-y>.

<b>ENABLE-TAAT (Nigeria)</b>	Agribusiness entrepreneurial capacity building; fusion of modernized technology with sustained technical mentorship.	Successfully catalyzed real entrepreneurial income growth (7%) and significantly bolstered food security resilience (75%).	Methodologically robust and holistic. Effectively operationalized Human Capital Theory, supported by integrated technical and capital access.
<b>Fadama GUYs (Nigeria)</b>	Sustainable agricultural mentorship; transfer of modernized agricultural and technical literacy.	Successfully integrated 75% of active participants into high-prospect rural agribusiness ecosystems.	High efficacy in technical skill acquisition; however, the economic multiplier effect was constrained by barriers to financial inclusion (e.g., low banking penetration).
<b>PSNP (Ethiopia)</b>	Rural wage employment guarantees; climate mitigation; integrated long-term food security frameworks.	Precipitated a drastic decline in extreme poverty and stunting rates through strategic productive asset transfers to the youth demographic.	Superior institutional governance. Features a multi-layered graduation model that facilitates permanent and sustainable economic autonomy.

Drawing upon the aforementioned matrix, the overarching thesis that crystallizes is that the failure of human capital absorption within Nigeria's agrarian trajectory is deeply rooted in the state's systemic reluctance to invest in structural exit strategies. Even when modernized competencies are successfully injected, the local economic ecosystem suffers from a profound deficit in institutional absorptive capacity. Absent comprehensive land tenure reforms and accessible microcredit instruments, trained youth are inevitably relegated to the ranks of the educated unemployed. Consequently, this public policy review unambiguously advocates for a fundamental paradigm shift: moving away from populist-driven cash redistribution schemes toward a model centered on productive asset redistribution and sustainable institutional engineering.

## **2. The Role of Social Orientation and Behavioral Public Policy in Mitigating Sociocultural Barriers to Youth Engagement in the Agricultural Sector**

The fundamental redesign of food security interventions frequently collapses into a reductionist trap, fixated on mechanistic variables such as fertilizer import quotas or logistical seed procurement. Such approaches fatally neglect the critical behavioral determinants of the primary catalysts for development: the youth cohort. Consequently, this section addresses the research inquiry concerning the efficacy of social engineering anchored in a Behavioral Public Policy framework in mitigating the pervasive sociocultural distortions that systematically alienate the younger generation from the modernized agricultural sector.<sup>22</sup>

Empirical evidence suggests that the Nigerian youth demographic with a pronounced emphasis on the South-East geopolitical zone exhibits a profound degree of apathy toward agrarian livelihoods. Within the societal consciousness, an entrenched collective perception has emerged, positioning agriculture as synonymous with intergenerational poverty and the negation of vertical social mobility. Economic expectations, increasingly distorted by the pressures of global hyper-consumerism, have catalyzed a pervasive 'get-rich-quick' syndrome. Sociologically, this pathology manifests through the escalating involvement of youth in transnational cyber-criminal syndicates, colloquially identified as 'Yahoo Yahoo'.<sup>23</sup> Framed within the discourse of institutional economics, this phenomenon transcends mere moral degradation; rather, it represents a rational choice predicated on profound state institutional dysfunction. When the formal agricultural sector fails to furnish adequate economic incentives or socio-structural security, the intellectual capital of the youth is naturally siphoned into the labyrinth of the shadow economy a realm that promises immediate financial utility as a potent, albeit destructive, alternative to stagnant formal pathways.<sup>24</sup>

Within the discourse of public policy, this axio-ontological dislocation represents a profound crisis in the governance of choice architecture. The rise of exploitative, pro-self-oriented career trajectories serves to cannibalize the prevailing moral fabric and erode the systemic foundations of social cohesion. In stark contrast, interdisciplinary literature

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<sup>22</sup> Peter John, *How Far to Nudge? Assessing Behavioural Public Policy* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2018). Page 32-35.

<sup>23</sup> Madu and Ogbunugwor, "Youth Participation in Agriculture for Sustainable Food Security in Nigeria."

<sup>24</sup> Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* (New York: Crown Business, 2013). Page, 71-81.

corroborates that individuals exhibiting a robust prosocial orientation possess the intrinsic determination to champion environmental stewardship and communal ingenuity both of which constitute absolute prerequisites for achieving resilient ecological food security.<sup>25</sup> Fundamentally, Gen Z and late Millennials possess latent prosocial dispositions, underpinned by a profound commitment to communal welfare and an intrinsic fluency in technological adoption. Nigeria's systemic failure, however, lies in the absence of a robust institutional design capable of synergistically channeling these tech-centric impulses into the revitalization of the agricultural sector.<sup>26</sup>

Consequently, social reorientation interventions must be mainstreamed through state regulatory channels anchored in behavioral modification instruments specifically nudging and institutional education. Conventional educational systems will remain insufficient for fortifying national security without a civic literacy curriculum capable of deconstructing the illusory economics of cyber-crime. The state must integrate the doctrines of ecological ethics and public accountability across every stage of vocational agricultural training. Furthermore, the state is obligated to reform incentive architectures to ensure that 'acting for the national interest' is fundamentally aligned with the 'attainment of individual financial well-being.'<sup>27</sup>

If these behavioral modifications are effectively institutionalized, structural impediments such as rural infrastructure deficits and land tenure conflicts—will no longer be perceived as civilizational deadlocks. Instead, these barriers will undergo a cognitive reframing by the youth, emerging as incubation spaces for social entrepreneurship. Youth, whose prosocial orientations have been recalibrated and who possess advanced computational literacy, will spearhead the development of agrarian e-commerce startups. They are projected to engineer digital crowdfunding mechanisms to decouple subsistence farmers from predatory informal lenders, while simultaneously designing farm-to-table logistical algorithms to mitigate post-harvest food loss. Ultimately, this orchestrated transformation of social orientation, catalyzed by behavioral public policy, will serve as the foundational backbone for the systemic resilience of the

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<sup>25</sup> Anna Sheveleva, "Values of Professional Sphere in Youth Subcultures," *The Open Psychology Journal* 13, no. 1 (April 2020): 27–39, <https://doi.org/10.2174/1874350102013010027>.

<sup>26</sup> Stylos and Bellou, "Generation Alpha in the Marketplace and Workplace: A Research Agenda."

<sup>27</sup> Charlyn, Gberevbie, and Osimen, "Fostering National Development in Nigeria: The Interplay Between Education and Social Orientation."

Nigerian food ecosystem.<sup>28</sup>

### **3. Integrating the Triple E Framework and Pro-Social Pedagogical Reform: A Strategic Roadmap for Sustainable Food Security**

This subsection articulates a conceptual synthesis designed to serve as a strategic blueprint for public policy implementation, directly addressing the foundational inquiry into the architectural design of food security strategies in Nigeria. Constructing a roadmap toward a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable food security paradigm necessitates the systematic harmonization of governance across two primary vectors: sociocultural interventions specifically the social reorientation of the youth and techno-structural interventions, characterized by the redistribution of the means of production. The analytical scaffolding of this policy roadmap is operationalized through the 'Conceptual Triple E Model,' an integrated framework predicated on three interdependent pillars: Evaluation, Education, and Empowerment.<sup>29</sup>

To ensure that these micro-level interventions are precisely calibrated with the overarching macroeconomic architecture and global geopolitical shifts, the operationalization of the Triple E framework is systematically aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Policymakers must map the reciprocal causality or the developmental nexus between the alleviation of multidimensional poverty (SDG 1), the eradication of hunger (SDG 2), and the fortification of institutional and judicial integrity, which is paramount for agrarian dispute resolution and the legal guarantee of the right to food (SDG 16).<sup>30</sup> This integrated approach effectively mitigates the risks of institutional fragmentation and the recurring pitfalls of piecemeal policy design. The roadmap is rigorously structured into three comprehensive phases, strategically formulated to address the acute exigencies of youth unemployment while simultaneously engineering a robust blueprint for national food sovereignty:

#### **a. Integrated Evaluation and Socio-Cognitive Reorientation: The Evaluative Underpinnings**

The execution of the evaluative phase mandates a robust multi-stakeholder synergy bridging the Ministries of Agriculture, Youth, and Education with the private sector,

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<sup>28</sup> Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), Page, 42-45. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511807763>.

<sup>29</sup> Abdulwaliyu et al., "Conceptual Triple E Model for Sustainable Food Security: A Solution-Based Framework for Hunger and Malnutrition in Nigeria."

<sup>30</sup> Mukombwe, du Toit, and Hendriks, "Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions."

academic technocrats, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to comprehensively map the spatial demographics of rural youth. This evaluative process is designed to empirically dissect the structural nuances of elite-driven land tenure, persistent asymmetries in credit information, and the prevalence of micronutrient deficiencies across rural hinterlands.<sup>31</sup> Within this preconditional phase, pedagogical interventions are operationalized through decentralized national curriculum reforms. The educational framework is strategically oriented toward fortifying civic literacy and ecological ethics, while facilitating the systematic deconstruction of exploitative asocial mentalities specifically those embodied by cyber-criminal syndicates. This social reorientation seeks to cultivate a collective consciousness that positions food sovereignty as a determinative catalyst for the eradication of extreme poverty.<sup>32</sup> Absent this prosocial bedrock, state-provisioned capital assistance remains highly susceptible to systemic leakage and illicit diversion, thereby replicating the structural failures inherent in antecedent clientelistic and patronage-driven regimes.

**b. Climate-Smart Agricultural Vocational Training and Digital Assimilation:  
The Educational Underpinnings**

The second phase emphasizes the strategic centralization of state investment toward specialized technocratic capacity building. This stage draws critical lessons from the labor market mismatches that fundamentally compromised the efficacy of the antecedent N-Power initiative<sup>33</sup>, the curriculum architecture for the education phase must be bespoke, applied, and predictive in nature. Youth cohorts selected through the Phase 1 curation process undergo rigorous training in sustainable agroecological paradigms. Vocational modules encompass smart water management engineering, drone-assisted agroforestry, precision agriculture, and the integration of blockchain technology for food supply chain traceability. The inherent characteristics of this generation as digital natives synergistically facilitate the optimal assimilation of these sophisticated technological frameworks.<sup>34</sup> This synchronization ensures that technological innovations are channeled toward enhancing the distributional efficiency of nutritious food a pivotal factor in remediating the pathologies of chronic malnutrition and the prevalence of irreversible

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<sup>31</sup> Abdulwaliyu et al., "Conceptual Triple E Model for Sustainable Food Security: A Solution-Based Framework for Hunger and Malnutrition in Nigeria."

<sup>32</sup> Mukombwe, du Toit, and Hendriks, "Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions."

<sup>33</sup> Afolabi, Agunyai, and Costa, "Nigeria's N-Power Initiative and Youth Empowerment."

<sup>34</sup> Stylos and Bellou, "Generation Alpha in the Marketplace and Workplace: A Research Agenda."

stunting among children under five.<sup>35</sup>

**c. Structural Empowerment, Fiscal Analysis, and the Political Economy of Land Resolution: The Empowerment Underpinnings**

The institutional empowerment phase represents a critical juncture that demarcates this strategic roadmap from the fragmented architectures of antecedent initiatives. This phase must not be reduced to the reductive paradigm of transient cash subsidies. Rather, the federal government operating in synergy with the central bank is mandated to ratify a robust institutional framework that guarantees youth access to productive land through secure leasehold and usufructuary rights.<sup>36</sup> From a political economy perspective, land redistribution will inevitably encounter entrenched resistance from established land oligarchs of the older generation. Consequently, the deployment of structural agrarian conflict mitigation strategies is imperative most notably through the provision of aggressive fiscal incentives and tax inducements for landowners who formally lease their holdings to this new generation of young agriculturalists.<sup>37</sup>

From a fiscal space perspective, the implementation of this roadmap necessitates realistic financing schemes in light of existing state budgetary constraints. Capital injections for agribusiness startups and collateral-free micro-loans pivotal for advancing financial inclusion can be operationalized through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), a gradual and strategic reallocation of fossil fuel subsidies toward the agricultural sector, and the active engagement of multilateral donor agencies, such as the African Development Bank (AfDB).<sup>38</sup> In its capacity as a market stabilizer, the government must institutionalize guaranteed purchase contracts specifically off-taker agreements and price floors to mitigate market volatility. Furthermore, in adherence to the mandates of SDG 16, the state is obligated to provide comprehensive physical security within agricultural production hubs to shield young agropreneurs from the threats of communal conflicts and armed militia activities. This necessity is predicated on the fundamental principle that food security is inherently unattainable in the absence of national security

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<sup>35</sup> Abdulwaliyu et al., "Conceptual Triple E Model for Sustainable Food Security: A Solution-Based Framework for Hunger and Malnutrition in Nigeria."

<sup>36</sup> Madu and Ogbunugwor, "Youth Participation in Agriculture for Sustainable Food Security in Nigeria."

<sup>37</sup> Pauline E. Peters, "Land Appropriation, Surplus People and a Battle over Visions of Agrarian Futures in Africa," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 40, no. 3 (May 28, 2013): 537–62, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2013.803070>.

<sup>38</sup> Bonphace Mangeni, "The Role of Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) in Ensuring Technology Access for Farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa," *African Journal of Food, Agriculture, Nutrition and Development* 19, no. 01 (February 1, 2019): 14137–55, <https://doi.org/10.18697/ajfand.84.BLFB1018>.

stability.<sup>39</sup> The following section presents a holistic policy synthesis matrix predicated on the integration of the Triple E Framework and youth-centric social reorientation:

**Table 2. Synthesis Matrix of the Triple E Policy Roadmap for Nigerian Food Security**

<b>National Policy Intervention Phases</b>	<b>Triple E Dimensional Mapping Correlation</b>	<b>Central Focal Points of Public Policy Administrative Intervention</b>	<b>Measurable Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Benchmarks</b>
<b>Phase 1: Preconditional Diagnosis &amp; Value Recalibration</b>	<b>Evaluation</b> (Evaluative Mapping Foundations)	Execution of structural audits to map land-tenure oligarchies and the systemic orchestration of curriculum overhauls focused on civic duty and ecological literacy.	Quantifiable reduction in youth participation rates within the "shadow economy" (specifically cyber-criminal and illicit digital networks).
<b>Phase 2: Incubation of Labor Capacity Modernization</b>	<b>Education</b> (Applied Pedagogical Foundations)	Implementation of vocational training programs in climate-resilient cultivation and the assimilation of digital agribusiness integrations via integrated public-private consortia.	Increased graduation ratios of youth holding international competency certifications in precision irrigation systems and advanced agricultural management.
<b>Phase 3: Acceleration of Permanent Financial</b>	<b>Empowerment</b> (Value-Creation & Exit Strategy Foundations)	Facilitation of collateral-free capital credit, fiscal incentives for productive land-	Significant aggregate surplus in real domestic food commodity

<sup>39</sup> Mukombwe, du Toit, and Hendriks, "Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions."

<b>Autonomy</b>		lease redistribution, and the provision of robust physical security for agricultural production hubs.	volumes; drastic abatement in regional hunger severity and childhood stunting (SDGs 1 & 2).
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Consequently, mitigating the systemic food security crisis in Nigeria necessitates a "whole-of-government" approach that harmonizes pro-social educational reforms with sophisticated fiscal-agrarian engineering. If the Triple E framework is operationalized through a governance model defined by transparency and institutional accountability, the current youth demographic bulge presently perceived as a structural liability can be strategically capitalized upon as a primary engine of growth. This transformation is the essential prerequisite for securing Nigerian food sovereignty and long-term geopolitical stability in the sub-Saharan region.

**C. CONCLUSION**

The food security crisis and acute youth unemployment in Nigeria are fundamentally anchored in profound institutional governance deficits and sociocultural distortions that have systematically disenfranchised the younger generation from the agricultural landscape. Extant state interventions, exemplified by the N-Power initiative, have proven inadequate in securing enduring outcomes, as they operate merely as palliative measures for transient symptomatic relief, devoid of coherent graduation exit strategies or post-program capital accessibility. Consequently, remediating this systemic collapse necessitates a sophisticated policy roadmap that integrates the Triple E framework Evaluation, Education, and Empowerment with a rigorous social reorientation designed to recalibrate asocial predispositions into a productive agrarian ethos. Ultimately, a holistic paradigm encompassing civic literacy, climate-smart vocational specialization, and structural interventions most notably the redistribution of productive land leaseholds constitutes a mandatory prerequisite for mobilizing the demographic dividend toward resilient and sustainable food sovereignty.

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