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POVERTY-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS: THE NIGERIAN PARADOX

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Abstract

For quite some time, the country, Nigeria, has been grappling with the issues of poverty and development. In spite of the efforts made so far to tackle poverty, it is still very visible among the people. This paper examines the relationship between poverty and development. It stresses that poverty in the country has impacted negatively on the development and economic growth of the country as the poor cannot have access to the basic necessities of life like food, shelter, and clothing. As a result, the poor cannot contribute meaningfully to the economic growth and development of the country. This has affected the country in meeting its peers in other parts of the world in all aspects of development – politically, economically and socially. Most of the policies and programmes of the various past governments, both military and civilian (democratic), put in place in the past to reduce poverty in the country are discussed and the reasons responsible for their failure are pointed out. The continued pauperization of the people would continue to under develop the country as they are denied the opportunity to contribute to the economic and overall development of the country. The poor should be given the enablement and necessary support, like opportunity to be heard, access to credit and as so forth to enable them contribute their quota to the growth and development of the country.

Key words: Development, Economic Growth, Poverty

Introduction

Over the years, especially from the period of independence, the country has been grappling with development issues. However, Nigeria is not alone in this regard among the developing countries. Many policies and programmes have been put in place since 1960s, including development plans, to address development matters. Yet, the country is still making strenuous efforts to develop so as to meet and match its peers in other parts of the world.

Similarly, various efforts in terms of policies and programmes have been put in place at various times since independence to fight poverty in the country. Yet, it is still a persistence cankerworm that is hindering the growth and development of the country. Poverty has done a lot of devastating damage to the country in terms of development, politically and economically. Until the government at all levels make serious and bold steps to address it, poverty will continue to eclipse all efforts at addressing the development of the country.

One of the major issues in policy and development debate and literature is how to tackle poverty. Poverty reduction is one of the Millennium Development Goals which nations, especially less developed ones, must address. Consequently, majority of developing countries have put in place many poverty reduction strategies. The whole aim of poverty reduction.

Strategy is to ensure the wellbeing of the poor and low-income groups which is multidimensional in nature, comprising material and psychological needs. Wellbeing has been

described as peace of mind, good health, belonging to a community, safety, freedom of choice and action, steady source of income, food and dependable livelihood (Animalu, 2002).

Concept of Poverty

Literature on development and economics is replete with several meanings and concepts of poverty. This is because some of the definitions of poverty are reflections of the environment of the authors defining the concept. Many scholars have said that poverty is multidimensional with different meanings; hence Gordon (2000) said that poverty can be considered to have a cluster of different overlapping meanings depending on what subject area or discourse is being examined.

Poverty has material dimension, physical dimension, and psychological dimension. The material dimension has to do with economic issues like income and asset. The physical dimension has to do with both physiological and social dimensions like hunger, poor health, and poor education. The psychological dimension relates to both sociological and political; this includes voice, freedom, and power (Lindah, 2005). The poor person views poverty as being unable to get enough to survive as a human being. This connotes a deprivation of survival needs (Lindah, 2005).

Poverty is also regarded as inability within ability to meet the basic necessities of life like food, shelter, and clothing. This is similar to the physiological needs dimension. People are considered poor when their measured standard of living in terms of consumption is below the poverty line, that is, the value of income or consumption necessary to attain the minimum standards of nutrition and other necessities of life (Ravilion and Bidani, 1994). The poor people themselves are of the view that violence and crime, discrimination, insecurity and political repression, biased or brutal policing, and victimization by rude, neglectful or corrupt public agencies are signs of their poverty (Nayarana, 1999). Tollens (2002) opined that poverty is not an intrinsic attribute of people, but a product of livelihood systems and the socio-political forces that shape them. The World Bank (2000) also noted that poverty is an outcome of more than economic process but also include social and political processes that interact with and reinforce each other.

The Poor

The poor are those who are unable to obtain an adequate income, find a stable job, own property, or maintain healthy living conditions. They also lack adequate level of education and cannot satisfy their basic health needs. Often, the poor are illiterate, in poor health, and have a short life

span and lack basic necessities of life. Very often, the poor lack the capacity to escape from their situation by themselves. This characteristic is what causes the social conditions of extreme poverty to persist and to be transmitted from one generation to the next.

In their view, Aluko (1975) and Edozien (1975) see the poor as

- (a) Those whose ability to contribute to the productive process is insufficient. That is, those who are unable to contribute adequately to the productive process to warrant an income that would raise them above the poverty line.
- (b) Those for whom the economy has failed to provide jobs, that is, those who are willing and capable of earning an adequate income if only jobs were available.
- (c) Those whose opportunities to participate in the productive process are restricted by discrimination of various kinds, like age, sex, race and so forth.

Among the groups most affected by extreme poverty throughout the world are those who are most vulnerable and lack resources, along with those who do not have the capacity to organize themselves nor to exercise the right to protest their situation (Sancho, 1996).

Poverty indicators in Nigeria

There are many indicators of poverty in Nigeria. In spite of attempts at reducing poverty in the country, these indicators, mostly social, have not abated. According to the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) (2004), the poverty rate in Nigeria increased from 27 per cent in 1980 to 66 per cent in 1996. By 1999 it was estimated that more than 70 per cent of Nigerians lived in poverty. Life expectancy in the country was a mere 54 years, while infant mortality was 77 per 1,000 and maternal mortality was 704 per 100,000 live births; this is among of the highest in the world.

Other social indicators of poverty in Nigeria (particularly from 1999) are as follows:

- (i) Only about 10 per cent of the population had access to essential drugs.
- (ii) There were fewer than 30 physicians per 100,000 people.
- (iii) More than 5 million adults were estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS.
- (iv) Among children under five, almost 30 per cent were underweight.
- (v) Only 17 per cent of children were fully immunized – down from 30 per cent in 1990 – and almost 40 per cent had never been vaccinated.
- (vi) Only about half of the population had access to safe drinking water (40 per cent in rural areas, 80 per cent in urban areas).
- (vii) Some 29 per cent of the total population lived at risk from annual floods.
- (viii) More than 90 per cent of the rural population depended on forests for livelihood and domestic energy sources
- (ix) Rural households spent an average of 1.5 hours per day collecting water and fuel wood, with household members walking an average of one kilometer per day to collect water and fuel wood.

Incidence of Poverty in Nigeria by Zones between 1980 and 2004

Zone		1980	1985	1992	1996	2004
National	Total Poor	28.1	46.3	42.7	65.6	54.4
	Core Poor	6.2	12.1	13.9	29.3	22.0
Urban	Total poor	17.2	37.8	37.5	58.2	43.2
	Core poor	3.0	7.5	10.7	25.2	15.7

South-South	Total poor	13.2	45.7	40.8	58.2	35.1
	Core poor	3.3	9.3	13.0	23.4	17.0
South East	Total poor	12.9	30.4	41.0	53.5	26.7
	Core poor	2.4	9.0	15.7	18.2	7.8
South West	Total poor	13.4	38.6	43.1	60.9	43.0
	Core poor	2.1	9.0	15.7	27.5	18.9
North Central	Total poor	32.2	50.8	46.0	64.7	67.0
	Core poor	5.7	16.4	14.8	28.0	29.8
North East	Total poor	35.6	54.9	54.0	70.1	71.2
	Core poor	11.8	16.4	18.5	34.4	27.9
North West	Total poor	37.7	52.1	36.5	77.2	71.2
	Core poor	8.3	14.2	9.0	37.3	26.8
Population in poverty (million)		17.7	34.7	39.2	67.1	68.7

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2005, Poverty Profile for Nigeria, 1980-2004. Culled from UNDP Human Development Report, Nigeria 2008-2009.

Similarly, the National Bureau of Statistics (2010) reported in its 2010 report that over 100 million Nigerians still live on less than \$1.00 per day. Based on 150 million population, the Bureau reported that 112.47 million Nigerians were reported to be living below the poverty line. The Bureau further reported the proportions of the poor in the country thus:

- (a) Extremely poor - 38.7 per cent
- (b) Moderately poor - 30.3 per cent
- (c) Non-poor - 31 per cent

The report added that poverty was worse in the North West and North East zones of the country; while the least affected were South West and South East zones. The gap between the rich and poor is widening. This is in spite of the economic growth of the country with Gross Domestic Product of 7.75 per cent.

Causes of Poverty in Nigeria

The causes of poverty in Nigeria are evident everywhere among which are:

- (i) Inadequate access to the means of supporting rural development in poor regions. Often times, government gives preference to areas with high potential and strong urban biases in the design of development programmes. This is the result of minimal commitment to rural development programmes by policy makers. In Nigeria, lip service is always paid to rural development.
- (ii) Rapid population growth: There is a common argument which says that the more densely populated a country, the higher the probability of being poor. The rate at which population increases in Nigeria is alarming. It moves at geometric proportion which invariably leads to large family size. This encourages poverty to spread. The resources that would be used to cater for few people are spread to large population. This Malthusian thought contends that over population generates higher level of consumption which leads to low level of savings available for investment. This also in turn leads to low investment hence limited production.

- (iii) Lack of involvement of the poor in the design of programmes: In Nigeria, all the poverty alleviation programmes enunciated by the various governments (military and civilian) excluded the poor (who ought to be the beneficiaries) in their planning and execution/implementation. Hence the poor did not benefit from the policies and programmes.
- (iv) Low endowment of human capital. Human capital development is one of the keys to economic growth, development and social progress. It creates knowledge, broadens skills, and improves health which thereby constitutes a key to sustaining economic growth, raising living standards and enriching people's lives. The neglect of human capital formation pauperises a society. In Nigeria, many people do not have the basic skills for employment which can guarantee them comfortable means of livelihood.
- (v) Destruction of natural resources. This leads to environmental degradation and reduced productivity of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries; this is often the desperate survival strategies of the poor, as well as inadequate and ineffective public policies on natural resource management and industrial pollution.

Consequences and Economic Implications of Poverty

Poverty can result in many negative things in the personal life of individual in particular and to a larger extent, the society at large. Whatever negative effects it has on the individual must equally extend to the society as a whole.

The inability of the system or leadership to provide the basic necessities of life to its citizens would have negative effects in many ways. Specifically, in a society where the majority of its members are poverty-stricken, there is a general loss of confidence in the constituted authority, thereby generating disrespect and rendering government policies ineffective. So long as people feel uncared for, and their loyalty to the system is not being reciprocated, the expectation effect, which is expected to facilitate the programme, would in this case incapacitate the success of policies as has been the case in Nigeria.

In addition, poverty has the consequence of breeding social disillusionment with respect to what the societal objectives are and members' responsibilities towards the attainment of these objectives. Just as ignorance maintains poverty, so also can poverty perpetuate ignorance since the victims cannot think and plan beyond where the next meal is coming from. It is a vicious circle, reproducing itself in perpetuity.

To some extent, corruption, nepotism, crimes and other social vices are by-products of poverty. So long as making ends meet remains difficult, the propensity to explore other avenues, such as stealing, is high. Suffice it to say here that unmitigated corruption in high places as is the case in Nigeria currently, breeds corruption lower down, since the desire to amass wealth by those with responsibility of leadership can only be satisfied through the appropriation of that which is meant for the majority. In so doing, the majority is compelled to fend for itself 'by any means available'.

Economically, because people are poor and cannot afford the capital needed to expand production, production itself remains largely subsistence. Labour is therefore intensive and the margin of productivity is low. Even subsistence production is not fully utilized because of poor processing and storage techniques, the effect of changing weather conditions, and damage caused by pests and diseases. The intensification of agricultural production resulting from increasing population, and the lack of financial capital and equipment has brought to the fore evidence of an

increasingly overworked soil. The linkage between economic performance and poverty has serious consequences, and can be very vicious.

No doubt, poverty has dampening effects on economic growth and development through inefficient use of resources, promotion of social and political upheavals and depletion of natural resources. The policy focus on poverty reduction in Nigeria has spanned many decades. There have been several attempts to put poverty reduction policies and programmes in the front burner so as to ensure the wellbeing of the poor.

However, despite the efforts of governments, the conditions of the poor have continued to deteriorate, and the population of the poor has continued to increase at an alarming rate. The poverty level appears as a contradiction considering the country's immense human and material resources. Also, poverty situation is a paradox because despite the huge resources that have been devoted to poverty reduction by successive military and civilian governments, no tangible and substantial success has been achieved from the efforts. Before the late 1980s, poverty was more prevalent in the rural areas of the country. Therefore, no wonder the governments directed poverty reduction policies towards the rural areas. However, from the late 1980s till date, poverty has spread to the urban areas thereby encompassing both rural and urban areas of the country.

Poverty and Development

Development means many things to different people. Often times, development refers to economic development. Some scholars relate growth with economic development or development. However, an economy can grow without developing. Some scholars also distinguish between growth and development as phenomenon that takes place in different societies. Hence it is said that "economic development refers to the problems of under developed countries and economic growth refers to those of developed countries (Jhigan, 2008). According to Todaro and Smith (2008), development has at least three objectives. These are:

- (i) to increase the availability and widen the distribution of basic life sustainable goods such as food, shelter, health and protection to all members of society;
- (ii) to raise standard of living, in addition to higher incomes, the provision of more jobs, better education and more attention to cultural and humanistic values. All these serve not only to enhance material well-being, but also to generate greater individual and national self esteem;
- (iii) to expand the range of economic and social choice to individuals and nations by freeing them from servitude and dependence, not only in relation to other people and nation-states but to the forces of ignorance and human misery.

Development in human society is a many-sided process. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being (Rodney, 1972). Development came to be conceived of as a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of poverty (Thomas, 2010).

In the Nigerian political landscape, the poor are voiceless. Often times they are used and dumped. The poor are merely used to make up the numbers during electioneering campaigns. At the end of every campaign rally they are given pecuniary reward for their participation and "services". On the day of voting exercise where every citizen ought to exercise their franchise to

vote for candidates of their choice, the poor are paid to vote against their conscience and for candidates they do not like because their leaders who use them for their personal aggrandizement have directed them to do so. After the voting exercise they become irrelevant till the next election.

Politically, the poor have no base as far as party membership is concerned because whichever party that brings more money is their party. They have no say on who become the party leaders or candidates. Socially, the poor are denied access to basic amenities such as potable water supply, electricity, good roads, health care, and other necessary infrastructural facilities that can make life more meaningful to them. The most affected victims in this regard are those in the rural areas and semi urban areas of the country.

The poor cannot make any meaningful contribution to the development of any society except they are empowered economically while social amenities are provided. The person who cannot feed or have no roof over his head cannot develop his community in particular and the country in general. Instead, it should be the other way round. That is, the growth and development of the society would help the poor to meaningfully impact on the economy.

In order to ensure the contribution of the poor to economic growth or development of the country, therefore, the government or leadership must empower the poor economically, and by so doing the poverty has to be alleviated through various strategies or means. However, Nigerian governments (both military and civilian) have attempted to alleviate poverty in the country.

9. Poverty Alleviation Policies

Policies made or enunciated by government are public policies. “Public policies are those developed by governmental bodies and officials” (Anderson, 1997.) Public policies are meant to solve people’s problems. This may be referred to as a policy problem. A policy problem is “a human need, deprivation, or dissatisfaction, self identified or identified by others for which relief is sought” (Egonmwan, 2000). In order for a situation or social situation to become a public policy problem, some of the following conditions must apply or occur:

- (a) A large number of people are in unfortunate conditions, suffer deprivation, are dissatisfied with an undesirable situation.
- (b) These adverse conditions are recognized by many people.
- (c) In addition to those who suffer the unsatisfactory situation, the decision makers are aware of the situation as they have responsibilities for coping with it.
- (d) People outside the immediate social problem (i.e. third parties) must show concern.
- (e) Large number of people think something must be done about the situation apart from merely recognizing the undesirable situation (Egonmwan, 2000).

Some of the poverty reduction policies put in place were as follows:

1. In 1975 the Universal Primary Education policy was enunciated. The purpose of the policy which was targeted at the illiterates was to provide free primary education. However the programme has been absorbed by the Universal Basic Education.
2. In 1986 the Directorate of Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure was established. The functions were
 - a) To coordinate and streamline all rural development activities in the country and to accelerate the pace of integrated rural development.
 - b) To promote a framework for grassroots social mobilization

- c) To mount a virile programme of development, monitoring and performance evaluation
- d) To provide rural areas with access roads and potable water
- e) To improve rural sanitation, literacy and technology.

It was targeted at the rural areas. It was to make rural areas more attractive to live in so as to stem migration to urban areas. It was also to change for better, the rural ways of life and modes of production in order to meet the challenges of increased agricultural and industrial production.

3. In 1986 the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was established. The objectives of the policy were:
 - a) To provide vocational skills development programme to secondary school leavers and graduates from tertiary institutions.
 - b) Special public works programme.
 - c) Small-scale Enterprises programme.
 - d) Agricultural Employment programme

It was targeted at the youths in particular so as to provide skill for the unskilled; that to enable the youths acquire vocation.

4. The People's Bank of Nigeria was set up in 1989 to
 - a) To provide credit at low interest to encourage micro enterprises
 - b) Provision of opportunities for self-employment for the vast unutilized and underutilized manpower resources in the country
 - c) Inculcating banking habits at the grassroots and reducing the rural-urban migration
 - d) Eradication of poverty and provision of succor to the poor
 - e) Bringing relief to the financially marginalized groups in the society

However, this programme has been phased out.

5. In the year 2000 the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). Its activity was to coordinate implementation of all Federal Government of Nigeria poverty eradication programmes. Its main focus was to coordinate all government poverty alleviation policies and programmes

In similar vein, the federal government also enunciated other programmes and projects which were aimed at reducing or alleviating poverty in the country at both rural and urban areas of the country. The various programmes were enunciated so as to achieve the actions and intentions of the various poverty alleviation policies. A programme is "the set or package of structures, processes, resources, and activities and actions designed to implement a particular policy" (Ikelegbe, 2005). According to Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1990), a programme is a plan or system under which action is to be taken toward a goal. Also, a programme is "a plan of future events and activities" (Hornby, 1995). A project is "a piece of work or plan that is organized carefully and designed to achieve a particular aim" (Hornby, 1995). The following programmes and projects were set up as fillip to complement the various policies earlier put in place:

1. The Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs). This programme was established in 1975 to actualize the following activities:
 - a) Provision of decentralized opportunities and resources in agriculture to small farmers

- b) To increase production of food and fibre as well as producer incomes.

This programme represented a truly innovative approach to agriculture and rural development both in their integrated supply of farm inputs and infrastructural support and in their efforts to revamp and revitalize extension services.

2. The River Basin Development Authority. This was established in 1976 to undertake comprehensive development of both surface and underground water resources for various purposes (e.g. provision of irrigation, infrastructure, and control of floods, soil erosion, and watershed management).
3. In 2000, the Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank was established. Its main activities include the provision of credit for the production, processing and marketing of agricultural products.
4. Also in 2000, the Universal Basic Education Programme (UBE) was established. Its activities include the provision of compulsory basic education for all up to the level of junior secondary school year 3 (that is, JSS 3)
5. The National Action Committee on HIV/AIDS (NACA) was set up in 2001 to provide advocacy programme to phase out the spread of HIV/AIDS (NEEDS, 2004).

Nonetheless, most of these poverty alleviation policies, programmes and projects enumerated in this chapter failed due largely to the following factors:

- (a) Complete absence of mechanisms to ensure sustainability of programmes and projects
- (b) Excessive political interference in both military and democratic regimes
- (c) Absence of a comprehensive policy framework
- (d) Lack of proper coordination of policies, programmes and projects
- (e) Lack of involvement of beneficiaries in project design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation
- (f) Ineffective targeting of the poor which led to leakage of benefits to unintended beneficiaries or targets
- (g) Unwieldy scope of programmes which resulted in resources being thinly allocated to projects.
- (h) overlapping of functions of the agencies/institutions which ultimately led to institutional rivalry and conflicts. (NEEDS, 2004)

10. Conclusion

Poverty and development are strange bed-fellows. Poverty is a hindrance to growth and development of any nation. In Nigeria, a very large proportion of the population is poor (about 70%). This is one of the factors responsible for the under development of the country, hence the country is poles apart from its peers in other parts of the world. The poor cannot contribute to development of any country as they lack the basic necessities of life like food, shelter and clothing. Most of the policies and programmes enunciated in past by the various governments have not helped the poor to move away from the shackles of poverty. The reasons are either the policies and programmes were targeted at the wrong population of the country, or corruption and lack of good governance prevented the poor from benefiting from the policies and programmes.

As far as poverty continues to soar in the country and no immediate solution found to it, the country will find it difficult to develop politically, socially and economically as the poor will continue to remain voiceless and powerless. Whether the country likes it or not, the generality of the people is worse for it. The empowerment of the poor can help in no small measure to the

development of the country in all its ramifications. With the present situation, the poor are incapacitated.

11. Recommendations

For the country to achieve rapid economic growth and political development like her peers in other parts of the world, poverty must be eradicated and must be seen to be eradicated; and the following recommendations should be carried out:

- (i) Any policies and programmes aimed at poverty reduction in the country must be taken seriously.
- (ii) One of the ways to ensure such policies and programmes are implemented is by enlisting the poor themselves in the implementation.
- (iii) The basic necessities of life – food, shelter, and clothing, must be provided and made affordable to the poor.
- (iv) On a similar note, access to economic resources like credit or finance should be guaranteed for the poor so that they can contribute to the economic growth of the country. Collateral should not be introduced as the poor and low income persons cannot afford it.

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