IMPLICATIONS OF POLICY ON EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER IN NIGERIA FROM 1999 TO 2015: PRELUDE TO POST 2015 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

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Abstract
Nigeria is a rich nation with natural resources that include oil and gas, solid minerals and vast arable agricultural land with favourable weather conditions for crop planting in nearly every parts of the country. Thereby, it has the capacity to reduce extreme poverty and exterminate hunger. It has the highest population in Sub-Saharan Africa with a population of 173.6 million people in 2013 but with the World Bank (2015) estimated national poverty line of 46% (% of population) in 2010. The study rests its definition and analysis of poverty in Nigeria on the views of Copenhagen Declaration of 1995 of poverty. It recognizes the nations push to stem hunger and poverty with initiation of poverty alleviation and livelihood policies at different times. It also identifies the boost on the policy thrusts on poverty eradication and hunger alleviation since the year 2001, an aftermath of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). At the end, it identifies the emerging poverty and hunger issues in Nigeria and recommended forward strategies that will alleviate poverty and enthrone sustainable livelihood in the post 2015 Development Agenda.

Keywords: Nigeria, Poverty, hunger, MDG and livelihood.

Introduction
Extreme poverty is inevitably interwoven and interconnected to hunger. Extreme poverty at many times is manifested in a non-preventable hunger. Therefore, urgent sustainable and transformative policy is needed to move any society plagued with them to an ideal, prosperous and modest state. Though, no nation may be absolutely free from poverty (and presumably hunger), but the difference is its intensity and malaise (Alfa, Otaida and Audu, 2014). Therefore, the definitions of poverty at most of the times depend on the objectives of the analysis being carried out. Thus, the characteristic of poverty that fits in to the aims of this study aligns with the Copenhagen Declaration of 1995. The Copenhagen Declaration of 1995 views the manifestations of poverty as “lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihood; hunger and malnutrition, ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services, increase morbidity and mortality from illness, homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments, social
discriminations and exclusion” (Anger 2010 citing Edoh 2003:68). Thereby, the choice of eradication of extreme poverty and hunger with the target of halving the USD 1 poverty prevalence and reduction of hunger which was the number one goal of the concluded Millennium Development Programme/project was indispensible and pivotal in ensuring reduction of poverty and a policy push for the current sustainable development programmes. Nigeria is a rich nation with natural resources that include oil and gas, solid minerals and vast arable agricultural land with favourable weather conditions for crop planting in nearly every parts of the country. Nigeria has 173.6 million people in 2013 which was the highest population in Sub-Saharan Africa and with the national poverty lines (% of population) of 46% in 2010 (The World Bank, 2015).

The 2014 World Bank Assessment on poverty situation in the world ranked Nigeria third among world’s ten countries with extreme poor citizens having extreme poverty with over 70% population living on $1.25 or even less per day (Daily Independent, 2014). The nation is blessed with adequate human resources to match its natural endowment which supposed to encourage prosperity and wealth. The paradox is that at the year 2015, the Federal Government of Nigeria said its economy was the largest economy in Africa but the number of poor people in the country was increasing with its continuous growing GDP (gross domestic product). The GDP of 2012 was 6.7%, 7.4% in 2013 and 7.2% in 2014 (Barunji, 2015).

Legal and Policy Framework for Reduction of Poverty in Nigeria

Poverty according to Oyeranti and Olayiwola (2005) citing Tollens (2002) is “an intrinsic attribute of people, but a product of livelihood systems and the socio–political forces that shape them”, thereby laudable National and State legal and policy framework for poverty reduction is indispensible in tackling and reducing the incidences of poverty in every society. Nigeria as a nation at different times initiated and implemented several policies and programmes year in and year out designed to reduce and alleviate extreme poverty and hunger in the country. The poverty alleviation and reduction programmes initiated and implemented by the Federal Government of Nigeria since the 1970s to the year 2015 included programmes that were orchestrated by Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (1972), Green Revolution Programme (1979), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) (1986) and Family Economic Advancement Programme or Family Support Programme (1993).

The Nigeria government initiated the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in the year 2001 aftermath of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). In order to eradicate poverty NAPEP (NAPEP, 2001) initiated the following four schemes which are:

- Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES)
- Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS)
- Social Welfare Services Scheme (SOWESS) and
- Natural Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS)

In its bid to continue to tackle poverty, the National Economic Empowerment Development strategy (NEEDs) was also introduced by the Federal government of Nigeria in 2004. The goal of the NEEDs include wealth creation, empowerment generation, poverty reduction and value re-orientation. Anger (2010 citing from the NEEDs document of 2004) enumerated that the actionable goal for poverty reduction were set in the following broad targets
• Increase average per capita consumption by at least 2 per cent a year.
• Create about 7 million jobs by 2007.
• Increase immunization coverage to 60 per cent by 2007.
• Increase the percentage of the population with access to safe drinking water to at least 70 percent by 2007.
• Significantly increase school enrolment rates, especially for girls, and increase the adult literacy rate to at least 65 per cent by 2007.
• Significantly improve access to sanitation.

Since poverty reduction in Nigeria has been intrinsically linked to gender (Alese, 2013 citing Caldwell, 2006), there have been pro-gender frameworks targeting reduction of poverty and extermination of hunger. Thereby, the importance of women in economic development of the nation has been emphatically stated in the “Gender in Nigeria Report 2012” which says ‘women are Nigeria hidden resource. Investing in women and girls now will increase productivity in this generation and will promote sustainable growth, peace and better health for the next generation (UN System Nigeria, 2013, pIX).’ Thereby, women empowerment has been a veritable key in the achievement of reduction in the incidences of poverty and hunger in every society. Thus, the Federal Republic of Nigeria in its National Women Policy (2000) stated that:

“Women shall be empowered, through appropriate educational and skill development programmes to utilize their great potentials for the economic progress of their country through their participation in the privatization of public enterprise in production for export and home consumption.”

This policy statement showed the intention of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to combat the incidences of poverty and hunger through the empowerment and encouragement of women to participate in its poverty reduction/alleviation programmes. In line with the Nigeria National Women Policy, the broad targets highlighted in the NEEDS document on poverty reduction may be seen as being gender friendly with some of its targeted issues focusing specifically on woman and the girl child. In the National Policy on Women (2000), the Nigeria government affirmed “its support for the alleviation of the numerous constraints to women’s full integration into its developmental process by seeking the full participation of women in the economic programmes of the country by backing it up with resources” (National Policy on Women, 2000). Also, the National Women Policy framework in Nigeria encourages the participation of women in the poverty reduction/alleviation programmes. Thus, most policy frameworks which include poverty reduction programmes initiated after the year 2000 when the National Women Policy was incorporated always include issues concerning Nigeria women. Hence, most of the social safety net and poverty alleviation/reduction programmes in Nigeria are in favor of women/girls and the youth (NAPEP, 2001, NEEDS, 2004, SURE-P, 2015). A policy initiative on eradication of poverty and hunger in Nigeria from 2012 to 2015 called SURE-P (Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme) was a Social Safety Net project created and expected to assist in reducing incidences of poverty in the country. The goals of the SURE-P as documented in its website include
• Health care for pregnant women and their babies through its Maternal and Child Health Initiative
• Programmes initiated to address skills gap in Nigerian youth graduate that are not having the requisite qualifications that are demanded by industry called Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS)
• Job creation initiatives that supposed to absorb women, youth and other vulnerable groups in the society for a year and are paid monthly stipends determined by their work called Community Services Women and Youth Employment (CSWYE) Project (SURE-P, 2015)

Therefore, most of the Nigeria policies on eradication of poverty which include hunger as seen above from the analysis of the policy statements and goals are laudable, gender friendly and target oriented. Consequently, it is expected that the implementation of their laudable programmes aimed at eradicating hunger and reducing poverty in Nigeria supposed to have positive impacts on every facets of the society.

Analyzing Poverty in Nigeria on the Basis of the Concluded MDG (Millennium Development Goals)
The table 1 below depicts MDG 1 targets, indicators, what was on ground before the inception of MDG 1 in 2000 and what happened after the programme took-off.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Before MDG (i.e. year 2000)</th>
<th>After year 2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty (Target 21% by 2015)</td>
<td>Percentage of population living in relative poverty</td>
<td>43% 1992 and 66% 1996 (MDG, 2007 citing NBS, 2005 and World Bank reports)</td>
<td>Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines is 46.0% in 2010 (The World Bank, 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of population living in extreme poverty (consuming 2,900 calories or lower daily)</td>
<td>Data not available.</td>
<td>2014-70% population live on $1.25 or even less per day (Daily Independent, 2014 citing World Bank, 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger (target 18% by 2015).</td>
<td>Percentage of underweight children (under five)</td>
<td>35.7% underweight children in 1990 (UNDP, 2015)</td>
<td>1. 27.4% of underweight children in 2014 (UNDP, 2015) 2. 8.26% suffering from hunger in 2012 as against 9.66 target (UNDP 2015 citing OSSAP-MDG)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Achievements of Eradications of Extreme Poverty and Hunger in Nigeria
Even though the poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines of Nigeria as at the year 2010 stood at 46% (MDG, 2007 citing NBS, 2005 and World Bank reports, World Bank, 2015), the
UNDP (2015) report citing OSSAP-MDG affirmed that recent economic growth particularly in agriculture in Nigeria has markedly reduced the proportion of underweight children from 35.7% in 1990 to 27.4% in 2012 trailing behind the 2015 target of 17.85%. The report further gave the Nigerian population suffering from hunger as 8.26% in 2012 as against 9.66 percent of the expected 2015 target.

Since the empowerment of women were core ingredients in most of the policy thrusts engaged in Nigeria as mentioned earlier, the expectation was for poverty and hunger to be noticeably reduced. Unfortunately, a larger percentage of Nigeria women were still noted to be living below poverty level. The, then Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development of Nigeria, Hajiya Zainab affirmed in 2013 that about 70% of Nigeria women were living below poverty line (Daily Post, 2013). This may be corroborated by the Gender in Nigeria Report of 2012 which reported that 80.2 million women and girls in Nigeria have significantly worse life chances than men in comparable societies (UN System Nigeria, 2013).

Nevertheless, recent data on women and poverty in Nigeria has not shown that there is notable impact of the policy initiatives and programmes on Nigeria women. This may be due to the ratio of the number impacted to the number that needs to be impacted which may tends to be extremely large when compared to the nation’s population. For example the Community Services Women and Youth Employment (CSWYE) projects under SURE-P have been reported to have created 21,000 job opportunities in the North West Geo-political zone in Nigeria (FRN, 2015). The impact may be inconsequential when considering the population of the region.

The following extract from Elumilade, Asaolu and Adereti (2006) reported the programmes carried out by NAPEP, the finances and its scope and its impartation and the involvement of women in its projects.

“When NAPEP came on stream in January 2001, it was given a take-off grant of N6 billion ($42.8m). This money was used to establish NAPEP structures in 36 states, the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja and 774 local government councils. Part of the money was also used in the NAPEP employment generation intervention which translated to the training of 100,000 youths, attaching 50,000 unemployed graduates in various places of work, training of over 5000 people in tailoring and fashion design, and the establishment of rural telephone networks in 125 local government areas. Other uses to which the money was utilized include of the delivery of the KEKE-NAPEP a three-wheeler vehicle project involving 2000 units in all the state capitals of Nigeria, the establishment of 147 youth information centres across the senatorial districts, the delivery of informal micro credit ranging from N10,000 ($71) to N50,000 to 10,000 beneficiaries most of whom were women, and so on.”

Alese (2013) in her research work on ‘Women and Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria: The NAPEP Approach’ (citing Alajuronye, 1992; Ogbuagu, 2000; Mbacham, 2001; Olajide 2004; Bayode, 2005; Ogunwomoju, 2007 and Tengey, 2009) also affirms that naturally, entrepreneurial skills were acquired by women through NAPEP but after handing over to States, the later beneficiaries were not given financial backing which contradicts the laid down principles of the programme. It is pleasing to agree that there may be progress in poverty reduction in Nigeria but it may be regarded as extremely slow when considering the population of the country. The estimated
population of Nigeria as at 2014 by the Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics was around 178.5 million people and male is 50.912% while Female is 49.088% as at 2014 estimate (WPR, 2015). Therefore, the clue to the determining the level of achievement of poverty eradication or reduction in Nigeria may be painted when considering the number impacted either men or women and number that needs to be impacted when viewed in line with the data of the people living below poverty line as stated to be above 70%.1

The issue of continued insecurity in the North Eastern part of Nigeria caused by Boko Haram insurgency for some years now has led to increased in the number of internal displaced people in the nation, this apart from increasing the poverty level of the nation might have also increased the number of people (both male and female) that faces hunger. Nigeria having 12.1 million people in a state of hunger top the list of 11 Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) countries that have over one million people each being affected by hunger and under-nourishment from the latest 2014 Africa Multiple Indicator Scorecard on Hunger and Food Security (Daily Independent, 2014). This expresses the level of poverty and hunger still being experienced in the country termed “Giant of Africa”.

Challenges to the Achievements of Eradication of Extreme Poverty and Hunger in Nigeria

The following are some of the challenges to the achievement of Goal 1 (the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger) in Nigeria

a) Absence of Effective Inter/Intra Governmental Coordination of Programmes

There has not been effective inter and intra governmental coordination of the programmes that have been put in place to reduce the incidences of poverty in Nigeria. The policy thrust at most of the time is always from the Federal Government but are expectedly to be driven together by the State and Local Government. Antai and Anam (2014) affirmed that administrative and operational failures are among the problems hindering the achievement of the objectives of the programmes.

b) Absence of Plan for Project Sustainability and Continuity

There has not been effective plan and will by the three tier government in Nigeria for sustainability and continuity of poverty reduction programmes. Instead every government intends and decides to kick start its own poverty alleviation programme instead of sustaining or continuing an existing laudable programme.

c) Corruption and Political interferences

The issue of corruption and political interferences at different levels of the poverty reduction programmes are hindrance in the achievement of the objectives of poverty reduction programmes at different levels in Nigeria. Ugo and Ukpere (2009) surmised that political and policy interference such as its instability have resulted in frequent policy changes and inconsistent implementation of project which have undermine the institution’s credibility and effectiveness which in turn prevent the achievement of the programmes. The authors citing Okoye and Onyukwu (2007) also observed that lack of accountability and transparency made the programmes to serve as conduit pipes for draining national resources.

1Data from the Nigeria Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development of Nigeria, Daily Post, 2013
Another author Alese (2010) quoted below a write up in a media on corruption and misappropriation of poverty reduction funds:

‘issues around the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) have dominated the media mainly for the wrong reasons.... The government agency has been enmeshed in controversy over sundry allegations, ranging from corruption, incompetence to misinterpretation of the programme’s vision. .... The issues had centered on mismanagement, especially, in the alleged diversion of N417 million of NAPEP fund as well as setting up of parallel phony companies to ape and appropriate the functions of the agency for the benefit of few corrupt officials.(Anonymous, 2010 p 1.)’

Many of the beneficiaries of some of the pro poor projects are sometimes not the expected poor but are cronies of the members of ruling party, workers of the agencies and not the people concerned.

Emerging Issues on Poverty and Hunger in Nigeria
The following are emerging issues in Nigeria that continues to negate laudable programmes and policies on reduction of poverty and hunger even in the face of the post 2015 Sustainable Development Programmes include

a) Growing Unemployment in the face of Dwindling Naira
There has been growing unemployment in Nigeria for some time now. This has made many youth to be jobless. This contributes to the increases in the incidence of poverty and hunger in the country. Also, the recent dwindling of Nigeria Naira against the Dollar may make the poor to become poorer.

b) Internal Conflict
Issues of insecurity and instability in the Northern Nigeria especially at the North East caused by insurgency affects the implementation of the poverty reduction programmes in the affected areas thereby increasing the poverty level and hunger in the region. People are displaced from their source of livelihood in many parts of the North Eastern states in Nigeria where human security has been in its lowest helm thereby encouraging poverty and hunger.

The recurrent conflicts in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria where the Niger Delta Avengers and other militant’s organizations are still destroying the oil installations in order to spite the Federal Government of Nigeria for some time now has hampered the oil sales. This is apart from the instability or downward trends in the world petroleum/oil business for some time. Also, the Fulani herdsmen continue to attack different ethnic groups in different parts of the country resulting in loss of lives and property, displacements of communities and people from their sources of livelihood.

c) Displaced Citizenry
The number of internal displaced persons in Nigeria continues to increase with instability and conflict being experienced in the North Eastern part of the country. The Director General of Nigeria National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Muhammad Sani-Sidi in the year 2015 gave the current number of internally displaced persons in Nigeria as 981,416 persons
The internally displaced people are dislodged from their means of livelihood, accommodation and environments. Thereby they are susceptible to every form of poverty and hunger.

**Conclusion**

The success of the current Post 2015 Sustainable Development Programmes in Nigeria will hang on good and responsible governance through practiced by the three tiers of governments (the federal, state and local). This will enable and create enviable environment for economic growth and business activities in every facets of the society. The booming of the businesses and the economy will succor poverty and hunger through creations of jobs for the citizenry. The need for development of accurate and detailed poverty maps and profile that will allow the identification of socio-economic parameters that predisposes to poverty and hunger in different parts of Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. The map will identifies where there are lags in development and places where investments in infrastructure and services will have greatest impacts. This will enable the policy makers and governments to know where to direct their expected interventions in case of pro poor projects. Also, the needs of an all inclusive management and monitoring of programmes on eradication of poverty and hunger from the down to the top and vice versa is essential in the success of Post 2015 Sustainable Development Programmes and other pro poor and hunger eradication programmes. The management and monitoring should include the representative of the government, the principal donor, non-governmental organization or civil society, community based organization and faith based organization. The management and monitoring groups should be involved in the identifications of the expected beneficiaries of the programmes. All pro poor programmes will also need regular evaluation, audits and impact analysis by an external body to determine its success rate.

**References**


