

THE PERVASIVENESS OF POVERTY IN NIGERIA; IMPLICATIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD.

By

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Abstract

The declared major goal of government in Nigeria has been to improve the standard of living of the citizens, raised the level of happiness and dignity of the citizens and provide basic economic and social infrastructures for socio-economic development. The high rate of poverty in Nigeria has become worrisome and embarrassing to most citizens as the country is been refer to in the international arena as "the capital of poverty" in the world. The rate keeps on rising without any appreciable efforts to tackle the effects, several interventions by successive administrations have failed to yield significant results in the country's Human Development Index (HDI) even in certain phases of economic growth. The paper therefore attempts to examine the pervasiveness of poverty within the Nigerian context and its implications. Progressive social theory was utilized as a framework of analysis which believes that the source of poverty are economic, political and social distortions as well as discrimination which limits opportunities and resources to create wealth and overcome poverty. The paper relied mainly on secondary source of information. The findings revealed that poverty is harmful to both individuals and society; the poor people have less nourishing diets; high infant and mortality rate; high underemployment and unemployment; diseases and mental illness; violent crimes; electoral violence; low participation of the poor in the electoral process and engaged in vote selling during elections, has been the implications of the pervasive nature of poverty in Nigeria. The paper therefore suggests that there is urgent need for pro-poor and bottom-top approach in tackling the menace of poverty in the country, continuity of policies and programmes with periodic changes of personnel in order to enhance programme delivery, diversification of the economy, urgent intervention in infrastructural development in both urban and rural areas and the eradication of corruption in all its ramifications.

Keywords: Poverty, Poverty Alleviation, Socio-economic development, Underemployment and Unemployment, Diversification.

Introduction

The prevalence of poverty in developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America has become a major concern to scholar and public commentators in recent times. It is conventional to read elaborate literatures with various comments and wild insinuations with regards to poverty as a universal condition of the backward nations (Nigeria inclusive). It is equally

crucial to point at the level of inequality in terms of development and/or underdevelopment in comparative terms; between advanced capitalist countries of Europe and America on the one hand, and those of Africa, Asia and Latin American countries on the other. It is argued as a matter of reality that the colonialist may have been responsible for third world maladies through the instrumentalities of colonial exploitation, domination and subjugation (Erunke and Usman 2009). It is also not out of place to decipher into the helpless situation surrounding these political entities when the colonialists are far gone several decades ago.

The high rate of poverty in Nigeria has become worrisome and embarrassing to most citizens as the country is been refer in the international arena as "the capital of poverty' in the world. It is a fact that Nigeria's poverty level appears to be a domestic problem far from passing the buck on the colonialist who are not part of the executive, the parliament, judiciary and party big wigs. Poverty appears to be invented and manufactured and made in Nigeria by Nigerian political elites.

At independence in 1960, Nigeria was regarded as the promising country in the common wealth of nations ahead of India, Malaysia and Singapore. But while these countries have made appreciable progress in most indices of growth and development, Nigeria is still struggling at the bottom of the ladder with most of her citizens unable to meet their basic necessities of food, clothing, shelter and employment (Usman 2014).

Nigeria with a population estimated to be about over 180 million, is the most populated nation on the African continent. Indeed, it is very paradoxical and laughable that a country recognized as one of the richest in both human and material resources in Africa finds herself in a rather ridiculous and inglorious situation as the capital of poorest countries on earth. Nigeria ranks as the sixth largest producer of crude oil in the world with billions of dollars earned as proceeds from export of the product, Nigerians had hoped that with such vast resources, it would be possible for the country to achieve massive poverty eradication and development.

Over the years, successive administrations in Nigeria has put in place measures to curb the menace of endemic poverty. These measures do not seem to have stemmed the tide of poverty. And so the challenge of poverty along with a myriad of other challenges bedeviling the country continues to ravage many citizens of their dignity, self-esteem and even their humanity (Egwemi 2013). So much has gone wrong in Nigeria with society incapable of arresting the trend of decay, it is needless to say that apart from poverty, the country is confronted with other challenges. These challenges include endemic corruption, ethno-religious conflicts, herdsman/farmers clashes, lack of patriotism on the part of political elites and followers and socio-economic and political underdevelopment among others.

The main focus of this paper is to analyses the state of poverty in Nigeria, despite the abundant of natural and human resources and to examine the particular problems that have shaped the

manifestation of the menace of poverty in the country.

Nigeria is a developing country and the impact of poverty given its pervasiveness has been very severe on the country's socio-economic and political well-being. Nigeria remains a country with high levels of poverty, deep, widespread and multifaceted in various forms. The official estimate, from 2009, was 46 percent, based on the international poverty line of 1.90 US dollar per person per day. In 2017, an estimated 49.1 per cent of Nigeria's population lived below that poverty line (WB Group 2018). It is against this background that this paper examines the state of poverty in Nigeria and its implications. It is argued that development is not sustainable in an atmosphere of mass poverty and deprivation. The deepened economic crisis and the intensity of poverty in the country have renewed interest in the fundamentals of the development process. Development can only be attained with the formation of policies that would address the fundamental problems of the economy including poverty and hunger. Massive poverty undermines the capacity of the citizens to mobilize required resources for productive activities, it intensifies the structural distortions that created it in the first place (Usman 2014).

Conceptualizing Poverty

Despite its universality poverty has no standard definition. There are various divergent views on its nature, how to determine whether it is rising or falling and the understanding of transition from being 'non-poor' into the poverty trap. The United Nations Department of Public Information described poverty as having various manifestation which include: lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure a sustainable livelihood, hunger and malnutrition, ill-health, limited or lack of access to education and other basic services, increasing morbidity and mortality from illness, homelessness and inadequate housing, wasteful environments and social discrimination and exclusion. The World Bank (2001) sees poverty as a situation of low income or inadequate income to meet the basic needs of life, categorized as primary, comprising, food, water, housing shelter, while the secondary needs include economic, social, cultural and political. It also encompasses services that includes health, education, security, liberty, freedom of expression and religion, access to productive employment, basic infrastructure etc. This categorization embraces a broader conceptualization of poverty. Essentially, poverty defines a dynamic process of socio-economic and political deprivation, which affects individuals, households or communities resulting in lack of access to basic necessities of life (Usman 2014). This is why (Sen 1987 cited in Onah 2006) argue that poverty is the lack of certain capability such as been unable to participate with dignity in society and make people lack the will to function and enjoy the core values of development and sustenance.

Indeed, poverty maybe categorized into three in terms of absolute or subsistence poverty, relative poverty and subjective poverty. Absolute or subsistence poverty refers to a situation whereby the households are unable to command sufficient income to meets and consume basic needs for food, shelter, clothing, transportation, and education. View absolute poverty as a situation of low income and consumption. Income and consumption levels are the main

parameters in deriving an imaginary poverty line often used as a yardstick for measuring the minimum standard of living. Citizens are considered poor if their measured standard of living in terms of income and consumption falls below the poverty line (Anyanwu 1997).

Relative poverty is an attempt to conceptualize poverty with respect to the living standards that prevail in a particular society. The key merit in measuring poverty in this manner is that it reflects changing perceptions of acceptable minimum living standard. Individuals in relative poverty have their resources lower than those possessed by average individuals to the extent that they are excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities. Relative poverty exists when the subjective concerned are poor in relation to others.

Subjective poverty necessary requires a country to state what is actually considered the minimum adequate standard of living for a given period. This depends on individual's views about their standard of living.

Theoretical Framework of Analysis

It is imperative to state that the Nigerian economy has refused to respond to treatment despite several reforms by successive regimes since her independence over five decades ago. The true position is that academic explanation for the failure of the economy are blamed mainly on mis-governance, rent seeking and corruption. This has created a situation of mass poverty in the country. This paper is anchor on progressive social theory for our analysis on the nature of poverty and its implications on the nation. The proponents of this theory do not view individuals as the source of poverty but, the economic, political and social distortions as well as discrimination, which limit opportunities and resources to create wealth and overcome poverty. They argue that the economic system of capitalism created a reserve army of the unemployed and then poverty becomes an intrinsic and integral feature of capitalist society, which is a direct consequence of the inequality inherent in the class system.

The progressive social theory ascribes poverty to economic, social and political structures that make the poor fall behind regardless of how committed they may be. Another category of the system flaws associated with poverty according to Danaan (2018) relates to groups of people being discriminated against based on personal attributes such as race, gender, disability and religion, which limits their opportunities in spite of their personal capabilities.

The political economy of Nigeria has contributed seriously to the level of poverty in the country. It is a fact that there is strong correlation between the character of governance and the level of poverty in the country. Usman (2012) explain that with the emergence of oil-economy and huge oil earnings primitive capitalist accumulation intensified and the emerging business class and the bureaucratic bourgeoisie as well as the politicians became corrupt. State power and positions were now increasingly seen as the most viable and rapid avenues for acquisition of private wealth. The result and effect was low standard of living, high level of poverty and high intensity

of conflict and crimes in the country.

The productive base of Nigeria's economic is narrow, with much dependent on oil revenue and neglect of other critical sectors that should have aided in the diversification of the economy for massive job creation, expansion of markets and industrialization given her human and natural resources. Misplacement of priorities by the political leadership manifesting in wasteful spending and corruption rather than investment in other sectors of the economy that can enhance the standard of living of the citizens, has escalated poverty in the country.

The State of Poverty in Nigeria

Poverty would be organic to any country that restricts individuals or groups access to means of production. As rightly opined by (Kwanashie 1998 cited in Usman 2014), in a situation of mass poverty a country with abundant resources like Nigeria might be incapable of transforming them into welfare advance for its citizens, for the forces which govern and determine the pattern of ownership of means of production and the forces which govern the access to the development process are important factors as they determine the structure of interpersonal and inter-group differentials in wealth and income in the nation.

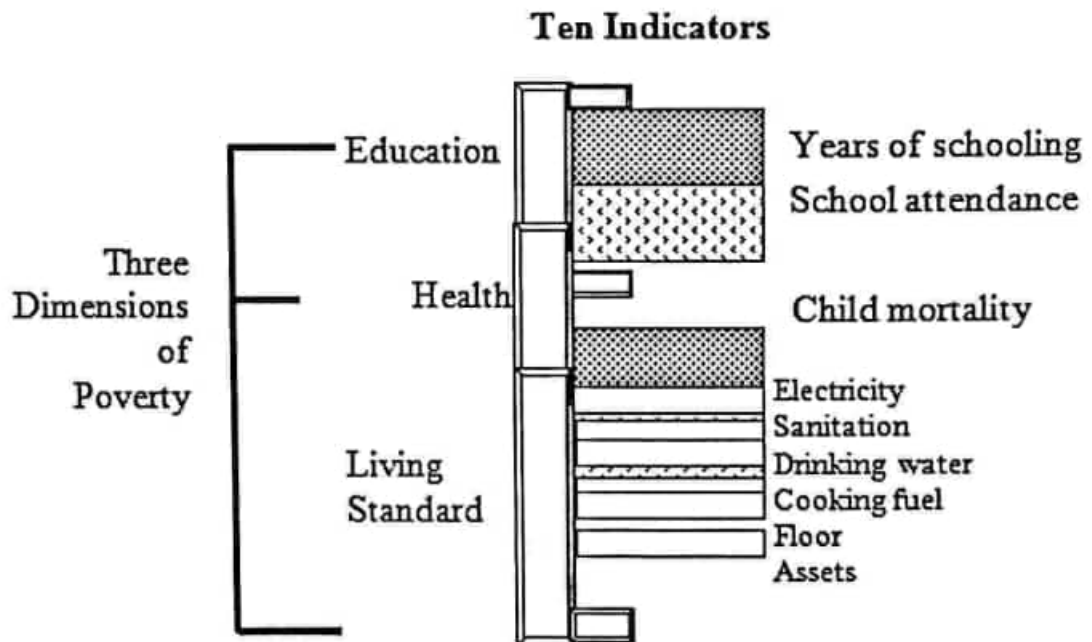
Nigeria remains a country with high level of mass poverty. The poverty trend follows macroeconomic developments. Low oil prices in the international oil market had detrimental impact on the country, for economic shocks easily reflect in the reduction of welfare across the population, mainly among the less resilient groups in the bottom strata of the income distribution. Households suffer from a high degree of vulnerability and over five out of 10 persons experienced movement into and out of poverty in Nigeria during 2011-2016. This depicts that economic shocks (recession) easily manifest into the reduction of welfare across the population, mainly among the less resilient groups in the bottom of income distribution.

There is significant variation in poverty rate across Nigeria. In the northern part of the country, projected poverty rates have been increasing, this may be due to insecurity and displacement in North East, North West and North Central Nigeria with large consequences. It has led to low agricultural production, substantial disruption of basic services, damage to infrastructure, and depleted household food stocks, with several million citizens facing a food security crisis. In the southern part of the country the poverty incidence appears to have fallen drastically. This divergence in welfare trends indicates large disparities in living standards due to many factors, ranging from the availability of jobs to returns on human capital in that part of the country.

Poverty is a major challenge in Nigeria today. The phenomenon manifests in both absolute and relative terms. Studies has revealed that the incidence of poverty in terms of those who live below one dollar per day is put at between 46.0 percent at national level and 53.5 percent at international poverty line (WB Group 2018).

Studies have further discussed the multidimensional poverty in Nigeria. The Oxford Poverty

and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) country briefing 2017 on Nigeria, identified three dimensions and ten indicators as the diagram below shows.



Source: Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (DPHI) Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford, 2017

A person is identified as multidimensional poor if he or she is deprived in at least one third of the weighted indicators. The MPI complements income-based poverty measures by reflecting the multiple deprivations the people are face at the same time. The MPI identifies across health, education and living standards, and shows the number of people who are multidimensional poor and the deprivations that they faced at the household level.

Table 1: MPI Results at the National Level

| Survey | Year | Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) (2010=100%) | Percentage of Poor People (H) (2010=100%) | Average Deprivations per Poor (A) | Percentage of Population: | | | Inequality Among the MPI Poor |
|--------|------|--|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|
| | | | | | Vulnerable to Poverty (20%) | In Severe Poverty (10-50%) | Deprived | |
| DHS | 2013 | 0.303 | 53.3% | 56.8% | 17.5% | 32.8% | 34.6% | 0.297 |

Source: Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (DPHI) Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford, 2017

The MPI can also be broken down by states to show disparities in poverty in Nigeria. Table 2 below shows multidimensional poverty across states in Nigeria

Table 2: Multidimensional Poverty across States in Nigeria

| State | MPI (H-A) | B (Incidence) $\leq 33.3\%$ | A (Intensity) | Vulnerable to Poverty $20\% \leq 33.3\%$ | Percentage of Population: | | Inequality among the MPI Poor | Population share |
|-------------|-----------|-----------------------------|---------------|--|-------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| | | | | | In Severe Poverty $\leq 50\%$ | Destitute | | |
| Nigeria | 0.303 | 53.3% | 56.8% | 17.5% | 32.8% | 34.6% | 0.297 | 100% |
| Urban | 0.132 | 28.1% | 47.0% | 22.2% | 10.5% | - | - | 39.9% |
| Rural | 0.416 | 70.0% | 59.5% | 14.4% | 47.7% | - | - | 60.1% |
| Lagos | 0.035 | 8.5% | 41.1% | 20.0% | 1.1% | 1.3% | 0.045 | 4.6% |
| Osun | 0.043 | 10.9% | 39.7% | 22.1% | 1.5% | 1.9% | 0.051 | 1.9% |
| Anambra | 0.050 | 11.2% | 44.5% | 19.1% | 2.7% | 3.1% | 0.131 | 2.4% |
| Ekiti | 0.051 | 12.9% | 39.6% | 27.0% | 2.4% | 2.8% | 0.073 | 0.8% |
| Edo | 0.080 | 19.2% | 41.5% | 23.9% | 4.5% | 6.5% | 0.078 | 1.7% |
| Imo | 0.083 | 19.8% | 41.9% | 24.0% | 4.9% | 6.2% | 0.068 | 2.2% |
| Abia | 0.088 | 21.0% | 42.0% | 25.3% | 4.8% | 7.7% | 0.078 | 1.3% |
| Rivers | 0.088 | 21.1% | 41.6% | 21.3% | 4.7% | 6.3% | 0.073 | 2.8% |
| Akwa Ibom | 0.099 | 23.8% | 41.6% | 22.8% | 5.2% | 7.2% | 0.079 | 2.0% |
| Kwara | 0.099 | 23.7% | 41.9% | 23.3% | 6.2% | 7.0% | 0.096 | 1.5% |
| Delta | 0.107 | 25.1% | 42.5% | 22.5% | 6.6% | 9.6% | 0.106 | 2.1% |
| FCT (Abuja) | 0.108 | 23.5% | 45.7% | 14.9% | 9.5% | 10.5% | 0.142 | 0.8% |
| Ogun | 0.112 | 26.4% | 42.5% | 30.5% | 5.6% | 9.3% | 0.073 | 2.5% |
| Kogi | 0.113 | 26.1% | 43.2% | 27.1% | 6.4% | 8.5% | 0.076 | 1.8% |
| Bayelsa | 0.120 | 29.0% | 41.4% | 26.8% | 5.9% | 8.6% | 0.066 | 0.8% |
| Enugu | 0.123 | 28.8% | 42.6% | 27.8% | 6.9% | 13.7% | 0.093 | 2.1% |
| Ondo | 0.127 | 27.9% | 45.4% | 26.6% | 8.2% | 11.0% | 0.089 | 2.0% |
| Cross River | 0.146 | 33.1% | 44.2% | 24.9% | 9.0% | 10.2% | 0.106 | 1.8% |
| Oyo | 0.155 | 29.4% | 52.7% | 24.7% | 13.0% | 14.8% | 0.316 | 4.0% |
| Nasarawa | 0.251 | 52.4% | 48.0% | 24.9% | 23.2% | 26.5% | 0.127 | 1.7% |
| Ebonyi | 0.265 | 56.0% | 47.3% | 25.1% | 23.5% | 26.6% | 0.124 | 2.5% |
| Plateau | 0.273 | 51.6% | 52.9% | 22.4% | 26.9% | 30.5% | 0.238 | 1.8% |
| Benue | 0.280 | 59.2% | 47.3% | 23.4% | 24.8% | 24.8% | 0.131 | 3.5% |
| Adamawa | 0.295 | 59.0% | 49.9% | 20.4% | 27.7% | 30.1% | 0.203 | 2.1% |
| Kaduna | 0.311 | 56.5% | 55.1% | 18.2% | 34.1% | 36.9% | 0.267 | 5.2% |
| Niger | 0.324 | 61.2% | 52.9% | 16.2% | 33.2% | 37.8% | 0.223 | 4.5% |
| Borno | 0.401 | 70.1% | 57.2% | 16.2% | 49.3% | 54.7% | 0.201 | 3.5% |
| Kano | 0.434 | 76.4% | 56.8% | 11.9% | 48.2% | 50.1% | 0.265 | 8.9% |
| Taraba | 0.448 | 77.7% | 57.7% | 13.4% | 53.1% | 51.2% | 0.251 | 2.1% |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| Gombe | 0.471 | 76.9% | 61.2% | 13.2% | 56.1% | 57.0% | 0.300 | 1.6% |
| Katsina | 0.520 | 82.2% | 63.2% | 10.8% | 63.7% | 60.8% | 0.287 | 4.2% |
| Sokoto | 0.548 | 85.3% | 64.2% | 8.2% | 66.4% | 66.8% | 0.298 | 2.9% |
| Jigawa | 0.552 | 88.4% | 62.4% | 6.5% | 68.0% | 70.2% | 0.270 | 3.7% |
| Kebbi | 0.553 | 86.0% | 64.3% | 8.7% | 69.9% | 71.3% | 0.280 | 3.6% |
| Bauchi | 0.583 | 86.6% | 67.3% | 6.4% | 70.7% | 66.3% | 0.351 | 3.2% |
| Zamfara | 0.605 | 91.9% | 65.8% | 5.8% | 72.7% | 74.1% | 0.315 | 3.5% |

Source: Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (DPHI) Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford, 2017

The table revealed the MPI value and its two components at the states level: the incidence of poverty (H) and the average intensity of deprivation across the poor (A). The fifth and sixth columns presents the percentage of the population vulnerable to poverty and living in severe poverty respectively. The seventh column presents the percentage of the population indentified as destitute, or deprived. The second to the last column present the level of inequality among the poor. The last column presents the population share of each state, which has been obtained by using the sampling weight.

As evident in the table that depicts MPI across states, Lagos state has the lowest MPI of 0.035% while Zamfara state in the North West has the highest with 91.9%. On incidence of poverty, Lagos state has 8.5% while FCT (Abuja) has 23.5%, Zamfara state with the highest in the federation with 91.9%. On the intensity of poverty, Ekiti state has the least with 39.6% followed by Osun state with 39.7%, Bauchi state in the North east has the highest with 66.3%. On the vulnerable to poverty, Zamfara state stands at 5.8%, Bauchi state 6.4%, Jigawa state 6.5% and Katsina state 10.8% while FCT (Abuja) recorded 14.9%. States in severe poverty shows Zamfara state in the North West with 72.7% followed by Bauchi state in the North east with 70.7%, Osun state in the South West recorded 1.5% and Lagos state has the least with 1.1%. On destitute, Zamfara state top the list with 74.7%, FCT (Abuja) has 10.5%, Lagos state in the South West has the least of 1.3%. Finally, inequality among the MPI poor in states shows that Bauchi state has 0.351, Zamfara state 0.315, while Lagos state recorded 0.045.

Causes of Poverty in Nigeria

The effects of poverty on the poor and the society at large are diverse and excruciating; to the extent that it deprives the individual of basic human needs such as quality food, adequate shelter, clothing, medical care, etc. It makes the citizens vulnerable, isolated, inferior, physically weak and humiliated, thus depriving them the right to exercise their full potentials for their wellbeing and growth as well as that of the entire society. This further placed the society into what (Nurkse 1953) describes, as the viscous circle of poverty defined as 'a circular constellation of forces tending to act and react upon one another in such a way as to keep a poor nation in a state of

poverty: low income results in low saving and investment in turn results in continued low income.

Poverty undermines the ability of the citizens to harness the needed resources for productive activities. The lingering phenomenon of poverty in Nigeria is not isolated from other sub-Saharan Africa countries bedeviled by extreme poverty levels, the reasons which among other include:

- (a) Lack of good governance by the political class
- (b) Lack of critical infrastructures
- (c) Population explosion
- (d) Inadequate support for rural development in poor regions in the country
- (e) Neglect of agricultural sector with much focus and dependency on oil.
- (f) Inadequate access to market where the rural farmers can sell their farm produce.
- (g) Lack of storage facilities.
- (h) Lack of access to quality education and training.
- (i) Inadequate access to employment opportunities among the youth.
- (j) Debt overhang of Nigeria state over the years.

All these and many other factors, have not allowed the Nigerian state to effectively address the phenomenon of pandemic poverty in the country. The structure of political power in Nigeria further provides some insight into the causes of poverty. Political power in all determines how national wealth is expropriated by a small group of elite who reserve the prerogative to steal resources in the nation's economy and consistently undermine the economy to grow through mismanagement, corruption and bad governance and this has placed the country in a circle of poverty and deprivation in the midst of plenty.

The Nigerian Government and Poverty Alleviation Programmes

The high level of poverty in Nigeria is real. Successive administrations have been battling with the menace of poverty. From 1972 to date, various poverty alleviation programmes have been introduced with various degrees of limited successes. In 1972, for instance, the General Yakubu Gowon regime introduced the National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP), mainly to facilitate increase farming and agricultural activities across the country. The NAFPP was viewed as a poverty alleviation strategy but with the emergence of crude oil, the thirty months' civil war and the overthrow of General Gowon regime undermined the success of the programme.

Another stage of poverty alleviation scheme Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) came during the military administration of General Olusegun Obasanjo in 1976, aimed at providing sufficient food for all Nigerians and facilitate agricultural credit from commercial banks to farmers. In 1979, the administration of President Alhaji Shehu Aliyu Shagari came up with the Green Revolution to provide sufficient food for all Nigerians. Both programmes were both an

attempts at alleviating poverty in the country through increased agricultural production.

The emergence of General Ibrahim Babangida administration on August 1985, witness the emergence of several poverty alleviation programmes and institutions created to address the menace of poverty. These include the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Better Life for Rural Women, National Board for Community Bank (NBCB) and the People Bank of Nigeria (PBN). In 1994, the administration of late General Sani Abacha initiated its own poverty alleviation programme starting with the Family Support Programme (FSP) to promote the welfare of women and children, the National Commission for Mass Literacy (NAML) with the aim to promote adult literacy.

With the advent of democracy in May 29th 1999, usher in the Fourth Republic, the Nigerian government has adopted several measures to tackle the scourge of poverty. Thus, under the civilian administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo was the introduction of National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) to coordinate implementation of all Federal Government poverty eradication programmes. It stands out because it is designed to improve the skills of the less privileged in the society, which is the basis for alleviating poverty in various communities. Another programme was during President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan administration, the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme, popularly known as SURE-P. It encompasses expenditures in transportation, maternal and child health, employment creation, and infrastructures which would benefit the poor people (Okonjo-Iweala 2018).

The President Muhammadu Buhari administration that came into power in May 2015 initiated the National Social Investment Programme, determined to improve the livelihood and welfare of millions of Nigerians with the payment of N5,000 stipend each to Nigerian living in abject poverty under its conditional cash transfer programme, the payment of N30,000 monthly to unemployed youth under the N-Power initiative which is designed to assist young Nigerians between the ages 18-35 to acquire and develop life-long skills for becoming change makers in the communities and to also address the challenges of youth unemployment. There is Home Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) in which public primary schools pupils are fed across states in the federation. Moreso, the Government Enterprises Entrepreneurship Programme (GEEP) designed to empower traders, artisans and so on since May 17, 2017 to disburse interest free loans. The GEEP has three products which are; Market Moni, Farmer Moni and Trade Moni.

Despite wide array of programmes and policies by successive administration in Nigeria to tackle the phenomenon of poverty, poverty alleviation has remained and has been that of mixed feelings. It is a fact that these programmes and policies were well intended and well thought out, but faced with lack of proper and/or sincere implementation by the major stakeholders. There is unanimity in the view of scholars that these programmes and policies have not achieved the desire results, despite huge amount of resources committed to alleviating and eradicating poverty. This means that there is need to re-examine the reasons for the abysmal performance of

poverty alleviation initiative in the country. In this view, scholars have identified some factor responsible for the abysmal performance of poverty alleviation programmes and policies. These include, but are not necessarily limited to;

- a. Poor design and implementation
- b. Policy inconsistencies and discontinuity
- c. Ineffective targeting of the poor (leading to leakage of benefit to unintended beneficiaries)
- d. Overlapping of functions which ultimately lead to institutional rivalry and conflicts
- e. Lack of mechanism in various programmes and projects to ensure sustainability
- f. Poor funding and corruption (Aigbokhan 2008 Dauda 2017).

For these reasons the intended outcomes have not been wholly achieved in the fight against poverty in Nigeria.

Implications of Poverty in Nigeria

Democracy as a liberal project emphasizes the formal, institutional and procedural elements such as a multi-party system, periodic elections, and constitutional guarantee of civil and political liberties. What it offers in substance according to (Egwu 2014), at best includes constitutional check on elected government officials and the protection of human rights. It is however weak in terms of advancing socio-economic rights and social justice even where they are formally and constitutionally guaranteed because these rights are not justiceable. The failure of liberal democracy to guarantee meaningful citizen participation and ensure the state institutions are accountable to the citizens, in terms of meeting their daily needs has given rise to concerns about 'diminished democracy' and 'democratic deficits' because of "declining patterns of participation", the 'hallowing out' of politics and takeover of political process of special interests (Egwu 2014).

It is of interest to state that political power is largely an urban phenomenon, located in the urban cities and meant for the exclusive use of the political elites. Massive poverty and illiteracy did not allow most citizens participate in politicking and gaining access to power. This minority control of politics and the economy is an important factor in the explanation of the underdevelopment of Nigeria and the increased and pervasiveness of poverty.

The effects of poverty are harmful to both individuals and society. In Nigeria, some of the unfolding effects of poverty include poor people have less-nourishing diets, more birth defects, accidents, disease and reported mental illness among others. There are also more likely to be alcoholic and narcotic addicts. As such, there is higher absenteeism at work and school, lower energy levels, lower productivity and shorter lives. Moreo, high rate of mortality of the poor mainly women and children.

Another effect of poverty in the country is that poor people participate in the electoral process in much smaller numbers and are poorly organized to influence any government policies. Poverty

breeds inferiority complex in the citizens and make them alien and slaves in societies in which they are ordinary major stakeholders.

Underemployment and unemployment are other effects of poverty. Unemployment is the proportion of those in the labour force (not in the entire economic active population, nor the entire population) who were actively looking for work but could not find work. Lack of opportunities for employment breeds vices, because out of poverty grows the greed and desperation to get rich at all cost through dubious exploitation and all sorts of illegalities among the armies of youths. Table 3 clearly shows the labour force statistics by state, Q3, 2017, it is evident from the table that the rate of underemployment and unemployment varies in states, but the aggregate for the country shows that there is a total 85,088,055 labour force population, those in full time employment stood at 51,060,936, the total unemployed plus underemployed person is 34,027,119 which is 40 percent; the unemployment rate is 18.5 percent and the underemployment rate within the said period is 21.2 percent among the age bracket of 15-35, which shows that the youth mainly falls in this categories.

Table 3: Labour Force Statistics by State, Q3, 2017

| State | Labour Force Population | Work 40 Hrs + | Total unemployed + underemployed persons | UNEMPLOYMENT RATES % | | |
|-------------|-------------------------|--------------------|--|----------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| | | Full Time Employed | | Unemployment+ Underemployed Rate | Unemployment Rate % | Under Employment Rate % |
| Abia | 1,977,464 | 1,033,044 | 895,692 | 45.3 | 28.3 | 16.3 |
| Adamawa | 1,489,492 | 894,220 | 515,732 | 34.6 | 6.8 | 27.8 |
| Akwa Ibom | 3,314,394 | 1,378,021 | 1,814,706 | 54.8 | 36.6 | 18.2 |
| Anambra | 3,100,597 | 1,861,763 | 916,026 | 29.5 | 13.7 | 15.8 |
| Bauchi | 1,881,158 | 1,193,101 | 729,777 | 38.8 | 9.1 | 29.7 |
| Bayelsa | 1,262,406 | 578,017 | 603,538 | 47.8 | 30.4 | 17.4 |
| Benue | 2,440,326 | 1,556,798 | 844,937 | 34.6 | 10.7 | 23.9 |
| Borno | 2,271,462 | 1,192,078 | 1,161,984 | 51.2 | 23.5 | 27.7 |
| Cross River | 1,799,882 | 1,027,841 | 728,995 | 40.5 | 20.3 | 20.3 |
| Delta | 2,938,439 | 1,776,035 | 1,115,690 | 38.0 | 18.0 | 20.0 |
| Ebonyi | 1,429,380 | 981,626 | 510,995 | 35.5 | 18.5 | 17.0 |
| Edo | 1,981,975 | 1,177,914 | 793,390 | 40.0 | 20.0 | 20.0 |
| Ekiti | 1,727,394 | 1,192,350 | 488,610 | 28.3 | 14.5 | 13.8 |
| Enugu | 2,365,690 | 1,515,035 | 889,079 | 37.6 | 20.2 | 17.4 |
| Gombe | 841,645 | 693,304 | 415,325 | 49.3 | 11.0 | 38.4 |
| Imo | 2,926,462 | 1,116,723 | 1,360,962 | 46.5 | 29.5 | 17.0 |

| | | | | | | |
|----------|------------|------------|------------|------|------|------|
| Jagawa | 1,411,109 | 971,212 | 881,029 | 62.4 | 19.4 | 43.0 |
| Kaduna | 3,258,609 | 1,233,861 | 1,909,675 | 58.6 | 29.0 | 29.6 |
| Kano | 3,713,679 | 1,848,522 | 1,903,252 | 51.2 | 19.7 | 31.5 |
| Katsina | 1,717,521 | 1,206,928 | 848,437 | 49.4 | 3.2 | 46.2 |
| Kebbi | 1,277,394 | 883,143 | 465,815 | 31.5 | 8.0 | 23.5 |
| Kogi | 2,320,203 | 812,007 | 996,765 | 43.0 | 21.4 | 21.5 |
| Kwara | 1,511,812 | 1,117,600 | 472,728 | 31.3 | 13.3 | 18.0 |
| Lagos | 7,118,101 | 5,449,002 | 2,330,257 | 32.7 | 17.8 | 15.0 |
| Nasarawa | 1,274,025 | 620,393 | 680,131 | 53.4 | 28.9 | 24.4 |
| Niger | 1,809,755 | 1,335,464 | 731,264 | 40.4 | 10.6 | 29.8 |
| Ogun | 3,001,263 | 2,391,857 | 633,239 | 21.0 | 9.7 | 11.4 |
| Ondo | 2,390,328 | 1,455,060 | 824,888 | 34.5 | 15.5 | 19.0 |
| Osun | 2,365,622 | 1,198,274 | 449,307 | 19.0 | 5.3 | 13.7 |
| Oyo | 3,907,460 | 2,780,936 | 899,867 | 23.0 | 9.2 | 13.9 |
| Plateau | 1,942,601 | 934,859 | 935,084 | 48.1 | 25.5 | 22.7 |
| Rivers | 4,301,988 | 1,910,467 | 2,639,589 | 61.4 | 41.8 | 19.5 |
| Sokoto | 1,566,339 | 1,085,809 | 741,825 | 47.4 | 18.6 | 28.8 |
| Taraba | 2,165,289 | 1,086,659 | 290,358 | 13.4 | 7.2 | 6.2 |
| Yobe | 1,037,277 | 515,884 | 602,535 | 58.1 | 21.4 | 36.7 |
| Zamfara | 1,402,408 | 1,165,254 | 476,124 | 34.0 | 7.6 | 26.4 |
| FCT | 1,627,110 | 1,169,875 | 529,510 | 32.5 | 15.5 | 17.1 |
| Nigeria | 85,088,055 | 51,060,936 | 34,027,119 | 40.0 | 18.8 | 21.2 |

Source: Job Creation Survey: Labour Force Statistics, 2017.

Poverty in Nigeria tied mainly to the level of unemployment among the youths has created securities threats which has impacted greatly on national security. The securities threats associated to poverty revolves around crimes, violent, ethno-religious conflicts, terrorism, kidnapping, political thuggery, electoral violence and vote selling among others. With endemic poverty in the nation the state is graphing with the control of different types of violent dictated

by hunger and demands necessitated by deprivation and deficiency. Poverty is an octopus dragging along multiple criminal and nefarious activities among the young and old, male and female folk. High rate of poverty has been blamed for civil unrest in the country, in some instances leading to group of people taking arms against the state or violent ethno-religious conflicts e.g Boko Haram insurgency in the North-east, ethno-religious conflicts in the North-Central region and the violent herdsmen-farmers clashes in most parts of the country. It should be argue that poverty is product of political instability which invariably gave rise to frequent religious and ethnic confrontation, agitation for secessionist and self determination which in recent times led to mass murder of Nigerian citizens.

Conclusion

This paper has dealt extensively on the state of poverty in Nigeria and its implications. The incidence of poverty in a richly endowed country such as Nigeria is a paradox that has continued to astound many Nigerians and the international community. Concerted efforts at alleviating poverty only seem to aggravate the problem. It is on record that several policies and programmes have been introduced in the past by successive administrations to alleviate the unacceptable level of poverty among the citizens. It is remarked that the over-aching objective of public policies, is the improvement, eradication of poverty and hunger among the citizenry. We have only been able to reveal the pervasive nature of poverty in Nigeria and the disconnect between government efforts at poverty alleviation. Most of these poverty alleviation strategies against poverty suffered the same fate, they failed due to poor policy implementation; lack of visionary leadership and good governance. Lack of complementarities from beneficiaries; uncoordinated sectoral policy initiatives, poor human capital development; corruption and inadequate funding. There is therefore, the need for government at all levels to genuinely tackle the menace of poverty given its devastating effects on the citizens of Nigeria.

Recommendations

In view of the pervasive state of poverty in the country, this paper therefore recommends the following:

- (1) It is imperative for a participatory and pro-poor approach to tackling the scourge of poverty in Nigeria. It is the case poverty alleviation programmes in the country have not yielded the required results because the targeted poor are not carried along in the planning and execution of the programmes. The government needs to de-emphasize the top-bottom approach and focus mainly on the bottom-top approach. It is on this basis that the targeted beneficiaries can actually benefits from the programmes. Egwu, 2007 has summed up the argument for a pro-poor approach to poverty alleviation programmes as follows:

The first proposal for anti-poverty policy measures in Nigeria is to look up to the poor themselves as the major actors in the fight against poverty. This can be achieved through a participatory process in which they set the agenda, define their priorities on the basis of lived experience, and play a leading role, in monitoring and evaluating the

policies and programmes of government. This requires building a critical mass from the rank of the poor and their organizations... it requires a movement of the poor, for the poor and by the poor (Egwu 2007).

- (2) Agriculture should be encouraged at the rural level. Because majority of the citizens are rural dwellers that can productively make use of agricultural credit facilities to improve their living conditions. Moreso, providing basic amenities and infrastructure like good network of roads, water, electricity and promoting the establishment of agro-based industries in rural areas are imperative in poverty alleviation in the country.
- (3) The idea of creating more institutions and managed by the same politicians and bureaucrats, to further their interest in an ill conceived idea of putting a new wine in a an old wine bottle, rather there should be continuity of programmes and periodic changes of the personnel in order to enhance sufficient programme delivery on targeted beneficiaries.
- (4) Those charged with responsibility of distributing programmes fund should be honest with utmost good faith to ensure the success of programmes implementation. Political office holders should use public funds judiciously to the extent that the same translates to impact positively on the citizens, poverty cannot be eradicated in an atmosphere of corruption, greed and absolute lack of political will.

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