

Interrogating the Concept of Poverty and Challenges of Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Poverty has become an intractable social phenomenon affecting almost all the nations of the world, especially in the continent of Africa and Nigeria in particular. The rising poverty situation has been attributed by many scholars to the poor development deficits plaguing most of the nation states. This paper examines the phenomenon of poverty and the challenges of development in Nigeria. The objective is to show the relationship between development and poverty reduction/alleviation. To critically do this, the paper adopts the descriptive analytical tool of investigating the subject matter of the study. Findings of the study also revealed that poverty is endemic amongst several nations. The findings of the study revealed that corruption, poor leadership and government policy failure are the causes of increasing poverty amongst the citizens. Furthermore, findings revealed that where there is quality and focused leadership, good governance and socioeconomic development capable of enhancing the wellbeing of the citizens and reducing poverty will be achieved. The paper, therefore, recommends amongst several others, that a focused and quality leadership that will reduce waste and invest in socioeconomic development that will enhance the standard of living and reduce poverty to its barest minimum among the people should be put in place, and that corruption and lack of clear cut policy should be abolished to enhance development and reduce poverty.

Keywords: Corruption, Development, Globalization, Governance and Poverty.

Introduction

Nigeria, like most African countries, is highly endowed with human and natural resources, as well as rich cultural heritage. Various administrations in Nigeria had, in the past, presented and attempted comprehensive plans geared towards reducing poverty and achieving development in the country. These plans, which were encapsulated for the country were to enhance the general welfare of the citizens and the nation at large. In fact, development and growth have been government's top priorities since the attainment of independence. This is because development planning can be seen as the only avenue where the allocation and utilization of resources can be adequately handled. It is also through sustained development efforts that poverty can be said to be reduced or alleviated.

Poverty is one of the vital instruments of underdevelopment as it has a negative effect on the wellbeing of the people. Despite all the development plans of the Nigerian government, a lot of setbacks have been encountered in the development process which

includes poverty. Osakwe (2010) argues that the nature of Nigeria's developmental strategy has contributed to the slow pace in achieving poverty reduction and unemployment in the country. According to him the country has not gone through the normal process of structural transformation, which are the pivot for generating productive employment opportunities and reducing poverty to a minimal level. Thus, the efforts made by various governments were not worthwhile as unemployment, poverty and inequality are still on the increase.

Ibietan and Ekhosuehi (2013) are of the view that the lack of coordination and harmonization of programs/policies both within the tenure of administration and those succeeding it has been the major impediment towards addressing the challenge of development. In line with the above, the argument of this paper is that despite all efforts by successive Nigerian governments to achieve development and reduce poverty, not much has been achieved. Consequently, the question agitating the minds of the well-meaning Nigerians is: what are the major challenges to development in Nigeria? It is, therefore, against this background that the paper carefully examines the concept of poverty, and its effect on development in Nigeria. Some theoretical perspectives on development and the challenges of development in Nigeria with a view to unravelling the relationship between poverty and development and a way out of the vicious cycle of poverty and socioeconomic development of Nigeria.

Poverty: A Conceptual Analysis

Like any social science concept, scholarly discourse is yet to arrive at a universally acceptable definition of what poverty is and its manifestations. In most cases, the varying degree of conceptual differences is simply as a result of the scholar's backgrounds and orientations. Let's begin from the angle of the view associated with the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (1999) which depicted poverty as a relative deprivation, denial of rights, inadequacy of material goods etc.

Conceptually, poverty affects many aspects of the human condition, including physical, moral and psychological. It is often defined as a situation of low income and or low consumption: and people are considered as poor when they're measured standard of living is below a minimum acceptable level, known as the poverty line (Ukpong, 1999). This poverty line is largely based on income and/or consumption. This view is in tandem with the NBS (1999), in that it identifies two broad approaches to the drawing of the poverty line, namely absolute and relative. Absolute poverty refers to the lack of the minimum physical requirements of a person or a household for existence. Relative poverty is more visibly arbitrary, and refers to a person or household whose provision with goods is lower than that of another person or households (Jev and Dzoho, 2014). It becomes apparent when one person or group of people is compared with another/ other groups.

Apart from the issue of absolute or relative poverty, the United Nations in 1990, introduced the Human Development Index (HDI), to measure a combination of a country's socioeconomic conditions in life expectancy, level of educational attainment, real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, etc. Based on these factors, the HDI is computed to indicate a country's position in relation to a specific welfare target expressed as a value of between 0 and 1. For example, countries with an HDI below 0.5 and 0.8, are considered to have a medium level of welfare and human development index (Ukpong, 1999, Jev and Dzoho, 2014).

In Nigeria, for instance, the HDI value fluctuated within the range of 0.348 in 1992 and 0.389 in 1993. It remained at 0.384 during 1994 to 1996 but rose marginally to about 0.393 in 1997 and 1998. The low value of the HDI for Nigeria is a strong indication that poverty, in its entire ramification, is a major problem in the country and Africa at large (Ikpong, 1999). On the other hand, Salami (2000), conceived poverty under the purview of psychology where the poor are powerless and voiceless. However, in whatever perspective the concept is viewed, it is the most repugnant socioeconomic problem hunting human societies largely due to its devastating effects. Its manifestations cut across gender, race and geographical locations of the world.

Socioeconomic profile of Nigeria published by the NBS (1996) conceives poverty as lack of resources to consume certain goods and services. Such goods and services could be considered as an objective minimum which include basic necessities such as food, shelter, clothing, among others. This definition has nonetheless been criticized. Afonja and Ogunmike (2003) questioned those things that make up objective minimum. They argued that it is not clear how we set minimum standards for basic necessities such as clothing, transportation etc. which may depend on individuals taste and the prevailing socioeconomic conditions within a given society.

In a slightly different way, Fajana (2005) conceives poverty as a situation where a population or a section of a population is living in destitution and survive on income judged to be inadequate to secure the basic necessities of life. It is a human condition characterized by deprivation, grief and despair. Essentially, it is the inadequacy of resources that informed the 1973 Santiago Declaration of Third World Economists that the third world with 70 percent of world population subsists on only 20 percent of the world income and even this meager income is not evenly distributed and thus leaves the bulk of its population in abject poverty (Salihu, 2016).

Rahnema (1990) had earlier on, defined poverty as a multidimensional concept because the number of the poor and the perceptions of poverty may be as many as there are human beings. According to him, the indicators of poverty that qualify one to be poor cut across country and language. The same indices can qualify anyone under the sun to be called poor. The list is not only limited to the weak, the hungry, the sick, the homeless, the landless, the cripple, and the beggar, not only the mad, the prisoner, the enslaved, the

fugitive, those in exile, but also all the losers of the world, including millionaires after the crash of the stock exchange, the fixed executive and the artist who finds no buyer for his work (Rahnema, 1990).

The issue of poverty goes beyond the limited perspective of income and/or food. While income is an important element in the definition of poverty, the social analyst is also interested in the overall resources used for existence such as human, social, natural and economic resources. As the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) points out, the use of aggregate income data as the sole measure of poverty may obviate the misery of people's lives, since income alone does not capture the reality of poverty in any community (ODA, 1995).

Sen (1999) is of the view that, what makes a person or group of people poor is not only lack of money but lack of productive assets that can be utilized to eliminate poverty, through addressing the issue of shortage of food and increased access to shelter, healthcare and safe drinking water. To Sen, the poor are, therefore, the vulnerable and powerless. It is argued today that, Africa is one of the poorest continents in the world (Ukwu, 2002) and most of the population live below the poverty line. The view that income and wealth are not only ends in themselves, but instruments for other purposes goes back at least as far as the time of Aristotle. In view of this, therefore, Sen (1999) argues that, capability to function is what really matters for status of poor or non-poor person. As Sen puts it, "Economic Growth cannot be sensibly treated to an end in itself. Development has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we live and the freedom we enjoy" (Sen, 1999, p.75).

In effect, what Sen seems to be portraying is that, poverty cannot be properly measured by income or even by utility as conventionally understood: what matters is not the things a person has-or the feelings these provide but what a person is, or can be and does or can do. What matters for wellbeing is not just the characteristics of commodities consumed, as in the utility approach, but what use the consumer can and does make of commodities (Sen, 1999).

Causes/Types of Poverty

Poverty can be caused by two ways i.e. from within and outside the country (George, 2002). In Nigeria, for instance, internal crises have become a prevalent occurrence. There has been civil war, armed robbery, armed banditry, bomb blast, kidnapping, the Niger Delta militancy which seems to have receded a bit since the introduction of Amnesty by President Umaru Musa Yar'adua, herdsmen/farmers, conflict and Boko Haram insurgency, ethnic and religious crisis as well as long years of military intervention have all created an opportunity for poverty to thrive. All these crises put together have taken a negative toll on the socioeconomic well-being of the citizenry,

destruction of lives and properties with the resultant effect being increasing poverty among the people across the country.

Goodhand (2000) reveals that the poor, particularly those in extreme, persistent poverty would mostly be victims of violent conflict as they are generally, politically and socially unorganized and typically unable to diversify activities or move to safer areas. On the other hand, Cramer (2005) argues that persistent level of poverty makes violence a more attractive means of earning livelihood and offers limited opportunities. This is true of what is prevailing in the Niger Delta and most part of the Northern region of Nigeria (Salihu, 2016). During crises or violent conflicts, assets that would have been used to alleviate poverty and enhance living conditions were destroyed and resources diverted to rehabilitation of damaged goods/properties instead of investing in the economy that will achieve growth and enhance the wellbeing of the people and reduce poverty.

Humphrey and Weinstein (2004) argue that in the poorer, more vulnerable households, the result of the conflict will add to their existing difficult situation. Those that were not chronically poor would join that category due to a reduction in food security as a result of market disruption and increased difficulties in having access to the market. Indeed, many poor households affected by the recent Boko Haram crises and banditry activities in Maiduguri and Zamfara, Katsina and Bauchi, the gas crisis and the raging herdsmen/farmers crisis in the North Central zone of Nigeria, has been forced to adopt very risky coping strategies that tend to reinforce their initial higher chances of vulnerability to poverty. It was in recognition of the above that Achebe (1983, p.14) postulates that:

The trouble with Nigeria is that of leadership. Nothing basically is wrong with Nigeria's character. There is nothing with Nigerian land, water, air or anything else. The Nigeria's problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenges of personal example, which are the hallmark of true leadership. We have lost the twentieth century, are we bent on seeing our children also lose the twenty first?

Okongwu (1986) shares a similar view with Achebe (1983) when he posits that, the defect of the past socioeconomic and political system lies in its (leadership) failure to mobilize the society and its vast resources towards valid production and stable economic progress. Similarly, Kofi Anan, former Secretary General of the United Nations said at the O.A.U summit in July, 2000 in Lome, Togo, that African leaders were to blame for most of the continent's problems. He pointed to the billions of dollars of public funds stashed abroad by some African leaders, even while roads were crumbling, health care systems failing, school children lacking desks and books, or teachers and telephone lines; African leaders instead engage in blatant stealing of public funds, leaving the people in a poor state of living.

It is worthy of note that some post-colonial governments in Africa have established defective political and economic systems where the state became very central in the scheme of affairs with enormous powers being monopolized by one individual or group of individuals close to the corridor of power. In Nigeria, there were the dictatorial military governments of Babangida, Abacha and the afraid of civilian military directorship amplified during Obasanjo's civilian administration, where some of the governors were unilaterally and arbitrarily removed from office through illegal means (Salihu, 2016).

George, (2002) and Salihu (2016) are of the opinion that, access to the corridor of power is a sure avenue to acquire wealth illegally. Therefore, government officials and their cabal become the richest people in Nigerian society resulting in unequal distribution of wealth. This can be attested to by the 2012 National Assembly probe of the down-stream sector of the Nigerian oil industry. Salihu (2016) argues that, the connivance of the cabals has revealed the enormity of the looting of public money by very few cliques. As observed by George (2002), more than 200 billion U.S dollars in capital was siphoned out of Africa by the ruling elites and that was equivalent to more than half of Africa's total foreign debt which was put at 320 billion U.S dollars in 1991. It has been reported that, every year capital flight from Africa has been exceeding incoming foreign aid. In some African countries, government officials have bigger bank accounts than the business people (George, 2002; Salihu, 2016).

In this way, if leaders and politicians of Africa are to live up to the responsibility of eradicating poverty, they need to start by returning the illegally accumulated public fund. Meir (2000) avers that, people not so much governed as ruled and that it is as if they live in a criminally mismanaged corporation where the bosses are armed and have barricaded themselves inside the company safe. He likened the situation to Nigerian leadership, starting from the colonialist before who have sucked out billions of dollars and stashed them in western banks. No wonder, Ake in his famous comment, observed that, consequent upon the greed by African leaders they could not change the market imperfections and the monopolistic tendencies of the colonial economy which have retarded growth and development in Africa (Ake, 1981). It is against the backdrop of the foregoing that, Ihonvbere (1998, p. 62) posits that:

The present crisis in Africa presents itself to our consciousness as a crisis of the economy, or more precisely a development crisis. Not surprisingly, it is in its economic manifestations that we see the crisis in its more concrete and most dramatic form. The long and continuing decline of real income, the swelling, high rate of unemployment, the chronic debt problems, the declining productivity and negative growth rates, and now the threat of starvation to over 150 million people. In the face of these realities, it is difficult not to see the crisis in economic terms. However, it is not simply an economic crisis. It is at least as much as a crisis of the state as it is a crisis of the economy.

Salihu (2016), in his categorization, brought out two broad forms or types of poverty. They are case poverty and community poverty. According to him, case poverty is found in more affluent societies where the individual or families suffer from poverty; their poverty is visible compared to the living conditions of individuals and families in surrounding areas. Case poverty occurs where certain individuals or families do not share in the general wellbeing of the society. On the other hand, community poverty manifests itself, where almost everyone in the community is poor. In this situation, the living conditions of the more affluent individuals or families are more visible compared to most of those living close to them. Community poverty is found mostly in the rural areas and serves in informal squatter areas of the urban centers (Frik and Sivanepoel, 2000).

Poverty can be further classified according to the quantum of suffering, hardship, deprivation and humiliation people are experiencing. Poverty can also be absolute or relative. Okumadewa (2001) and World Bank cited in Frik and Sivanepoel (2000) said that, absolute poverty is a situation where the incomes are so low that even a minimum standard, nutrition, shelter and personal necessities cannot be maintained. In other words, absolute poverty means that an individual is so poor that his or her next meal may mean the difference between life and death (Salihu, 2016).

Apparently, relative poverty can be seen as an expression of poverty of one entity in relation to another. For example, in the case of South Africa, Lesotho is poor. In relation to the United States of America, South Africa is the poorest country. In relation to the average American family, African-American family suffers poverty or deprivation. While in relation to African-American family, an average Malawian family is poor. In Nigeria, when a family in Asokoro or Maitama areas of Abuja is compared with a family in Bosso area of Minna, Niger state, the latter is poor (Salihu, 2016).

Oghenea and Ochaja cited in Okojie (2001), also categorizes poverty into income poor and, security poor, education and health poor. There is also political poverty, religious poverty, electric power, poverty, tolerance, poverty and poverty of the stomach, monetary poverty, academic poverty, legal poverty, etc. We can also add here what we refer to as poverty of conscience.

Concept of Development

The ambiguous nature of the concept of development has made it difficult to advance a precise meaning. In fact, there are numerous perspectives as to what the concept of development is all about. There is the perspective that sees it from the economic perspectives, while others see it as a concept that is multidimensional, meaning that development is beyond the economic domain. Seers (1979) define development by posing certain questions such as; what has been happening to poverty, unemployment and inequality? To him, if all three indices (poverty, unemployment and inequality) are at a relatively high rate, there is absence of development, and vice versa. It follows, therefore,

that for a country to be classified as developed, there are parameters to look out for which are: the state of poverty, unemployment and inequality. On the other hand, Ademolekun (2007) also stresses that development has to do with improving the living conditions of people. He also highlights some indicators of development, which include; a higher quality of life, higher income, better education, higher standard of health and nutrition, less poverty in society, a cleaner environment, more equal opportunities, greater individual freedom and a richer cultural life amongst citizens of a given state.

Oghator and Goobio (2000) point out that development goes beyond the increase in per-capita income or economic growth, but also includes sustainable improvement in the living standard of the people, which is guaranteed through the provision of gainful employment, coupled with the presence and availability of social and economic infrastructures. Ajagun (2003) corroborates that development is a state of advancement which makes life more meaningful in its various aspects, including the economic, administrative, political, social, cultural and religious aspects. This implies that development is not about a particular aspect, but it is encompassing, better still multidimensional depending on the point of contention.

Onah (2005) opines that development is not static, but is a continuous improvement in the capacity of the individual and society to control and manipulate the force of nature for the enhancement of living standard of the people in a society. This definition introduces another dimension to the meaning of development. It analyses the human aspect of development, that is, the individuals who reside in a given state. Ahmed (2007) also notes that development is concerned with the general upliftment in the material, social and psychological conditions of a given human society.

From the various meanings of development outlined, it can be deduced that development is not limited to economic growth or per capita income alone, but is a concept that is all encompassing, that analyses the economic, administrative, political, social, religious, and living standard of the people in a given society. Development strategies in all societies must therefore focus on the following objectives;

- i. Man-centered and his overall advancement.
- ii. To increase the availability and widen the distribution of basic life sustaining goods such as food, shelter, health and protections.
- iii. To raise the level of living, and in addition to higher income, the provision of more jobs, better attention to central and humanistic values all of which will serve, but also generate individual freedom and participation in the decisions concerning those issues affecting the society.
- iv. To expand the range of economic and social choice to individuals and nations by freeing them from servitude and development, not only in relevance to other people and nations-state but also to the force of ignorance and human misery.

Development as a concept is rooted in various theoretical strands which have been propounded to explain how desirable changes in the society is best achieved. The following theories therefore serve as a base for understanding the concept of development. For instance, modernization theory is an economic theory rooted in capitalism, which evolved in the 1950s and 1960s. It is a comprehensive theory of development which deals with the whole process a nation encounters in its attempt to transform from a primitive to a modernized society. Modernization consists of a gradual process of specialization and separation of social structures with the aim of promoting efficiency in the development process of any society. Roxborough (1979) argues that modernization theory operates on economic oriented principles which include capital formation and investment as the major determinant of economic growth and development.

Within the theory of modernization is the stage of development which views development as a process which passes through various evolutionary phases. Ollawa (1981) is of the view that development follows certain stipulated framework, as such, nations who seek to achieve economic growth must adhere to this framework.

The most prominent scholar of the stages of development model is W.W. Rostow. To Rostow (1962), development is divided into five stages; which are; the traditional society, the precondition for the take-off stage, the take-off stage, the maturity stage, and the stage of high mass consumption. The traditional stage is an agrarian society that is not aware of its capability to transform its society to a modern community. They are therefore not willing to take advantage of the potential of modern science and technology (Okereke & Ekpe, 2002). At the stage of precondition for take-off, the society becomes aware of its transforming potential and, in turn, gets involved in the application of modern science and technology to agricultural and industrial practices. The opportunity for investment and commerce therefore increases at this stage. The take off stage places emphasis on the eradication of traditional obstacles which hinder economic growth and development. At this stage, the commercialization of agriculture is introduced and investment rises to a maximum level. The drive to maturity stage is a period when the economy shows the capacity to extend beyond the original industries that serve as its pivot for take-off. The final stage of goods and services which is marked by a rise in real income (Okere & Ekpe, 2002). Implicit in the stage model is the assumption that some countries are developed because of their strict adherence to this evolutionary developmental process.

The psychological/idiosyncratic theory is also another strand of modernization theory which attributes the development of certain attitudinal personality variables. It is assumed that it is the innovative personality of a nation that stimulates economic growth and development (Okereke and Ekpe, 2002).

Just like most theories, the theory of modernization has also encountered various criticisms. The stages of development model of modernization as been Eurocentric has been criticized on the basis that development does not follow strictly a particular method.

Thirwall (1985) argues that the stage theory establishes a rigid platform for development and also creates an impression that a nation can attain industrialization only when the agricultural sector has been modernized. It has been criticized for being psychologically reductionist. It is argued that the theory employs psychological concepts to explain purely sociological problems (Okereke & Ekpe, 2002).

Globalization and Poverty in Perspective

Globalization concept is established on a perspective which is quite similar to the world system theory; however, its main focus is on the cultural aspect of the nations and their international communications. Globalization theory argues that development can be analyzed based on the cultural links which exist among nations in the international community (Kaplan, 1992). Reyes (2001) argues that the central premise of globalization theory is that development can be understood by analyzing the international connections, primary roles, and interconnected relationships which exist among various nations that play an important role in achieving any atom of development. Reyes (2001) points out that globalization theory lays emphasis on the cultural aspects of the nations and their interactions among each other, as such; development can best be interpreted along cultural and economic linkages existing among nations.

According to Moore (1992), globalization theory ensures that global communication system is gaining momentum in many parts of the world, thereby creating opportunity for underdeveloped nations to communicate with the developed nations through modern technology. The increase in communication among nations is creating an environment for business transaction which could eventually boost development. Globalization theory, therefore views cultural factors and communication network as the main determinants of economic progress in any nation. Globalization theory has been criticized for being an uneven process as it does not always stimulate economic progress of all nations as expected. Okereke (2002) maintains that globalization has bought about cultural inferiority among African nations.

The above mentioned theories tend to analyze development in Nigeria from various perspectives. The modernization theory, for instance, argues on the basis of Nigeria's poor state of development which is linked to her inability to adhere to the various stages of development as prescribed by Rostow. In addition, evidence also reveals that the innovative personality of the Nigerian state may as well have adverse effects on the nation's effort to achieve adequate development since its innovative capacity is still at a rudimentary stage. Others tend to attribute Nigeria's poor state of development to the economic exploitation from the more powerful and industrialized countries of the world. This is because there has always been an unequal trade relationship between the developed and developing countries of the world.

Thus, this paper is of the view that for development to be achieved, independent nations must strive to establish state owned industries that will aid in boosting their economy towards self-reliance. Development challenges in Nigeria like in any other country, can be attributed to the division of various countries into three hierarchical levels, which are core, periphery, and semi-periphery countries. Development can therefore not be achieved by the continuous exploitation of one country by the other. Thus, development tends to favor only those countries that possess adequate capital and technical know-how which other countries can depend on that have a greater advantage in the world market system.

Development in Nigeria like in any other country can be achieved and sustained when there is an increasing level of cultural and social interactions with other countries of the world. This is because the high level of global communication, integration and interconnection will aid in the transfer of ideas, technologies and capital among the industrialized and developing countries of the world thereby reducing poverty and enhancing socioeconomic development.

The challenges of development in Nigeria have become worrisome across the six geopolitical regions of Nigeria due to the prevalence of abject poverty. There are scholars who spelt out some of the problems that lead to challenges of development in Nigeria to include: Makinde (2005); Babawale, (2007); Nnabuiife, (2010); Yunusa, (2009); Itah, (2012); Gberevbie, Shodipo and Oviasogie, (2013). For Makinde (2005), the imposition of policies on citizens of the nation, lack of adequate human resources or capital to implement these plans/policies, corruption and lack of credible leadership are the major challenges to Nigeria's development. Most national development problems in Nigeria arise as a result of poor implementations of policies and lack of adequate and reliable human resources. Makinde (2005) further maintains that most policies of developing nations are imposed on the masses. Often times, such policies are made by the government without considering the target population, as the people are not given the opportunity to contribute in the formation of policies that concern their well-being. In addition, there are no adequate human resources developments in the country.

Records from United Nations Development Program (2014) report reveals that Nigeria ranked number 152 out of 187 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI) which indicates that there was low quality of life and standard of living among the citizens. The report puts the Nigeria's Human Development Index at 0.381%, which is below the prescribed level. The report also points that, although corruption is a global issue, Nigeria, as a country, is caught in the web of corruption. Often times, funds which are set aside for implementing policies are usually siphoned to the detriment of the entire nation. In addition, lack of credible leadership which can recognize and articulate the specific needs of the people also poses a challenge to development and increasing poverty among citizens of Nigeria.

Dike (2010) also stresses the fact that leadership has become a bane of development in Nigeria. Most of the so-called leaders do not actually understand that leadership entails assuming responsibilities of certain important issues. Poor governance on the part of the leaders has also resulted in inappropriate checks and has eroded the balance and mechanism to regulate the affairs of government officials and institutions. As such, politics is seen as “do or die” affairs, while issues of transparency, accountability and probity are relegated to the background (Shodipe and Oviasogie, 2013).



The leadership structure in Nigeria is also said to have undue influence and attachment to ethnic and other primordial sentiments. The improper assessment of policies implemented also serves as a challenge to development (Itah, 2012). Most policy makers fail to access the goal achievement gap factor. The reason for this is because most leaders present policies which are too cumbersome and difficult to achieve within the short period spent in office. As such, most plans for national development are usually abandoned at the end of such tenures. Subsequent governments also fail to continue with the plans which were left uncompleted. This, therefore, explains the reasons for numerous abandoned projects found in developing nations, including Nigeria. This neglect has become the major reason for rising poverty and underdevelopment of Nigeria (Yunusa, 2009).

Global Poverty and Nigeria’s Poverty Situation: Some links

Poverty is one of the intractable problems facing mankind today. In 1995, an estimated 1.3 billion people out of the estimated 5.7 billion people in the world were in the shackles of extreme poverty, living on less than one dollar (\$1.00) a day (Ilori, 1999). According to the most recent estimates, in 2015, 10 percent of the world population lived on less than \$1.90 a day, compared to 11% in 2013. That is down from nearly 36% in 1990. Nearly 1.1 billion fewer people are living in extreme poverty than 1990 (World Bank 2016). It has also been revealed that at least 80% of humanity lives on less than \$10 a day. More than 80% of world populations live in countries where income differentials are widening. The poorest 40% of the world’s population account for 5% of global income. The richest 20% accounts for three-quarters of world’s income (www.globalissues.org).

Of the countries that have the highest number of poverty rate in the world, Nigeria is the top rated as the most extreme poverty nation in the world. Nigeria has the largest extreme poverty population (Kazeem, 2018). The 86.9 million Nigerians are now living in extreme poverty represents nearly 50% of its estimated 180 million population. As Nigeria faces major population boom it will become the world’s third largest country by 2050, its population will likely worsen (<https://zz.com>; Africa, 2018). By this report, Nigeria has overtaken India as the country with the most extreme poor people in the world. India has a population seven times larger than Nigeria’s. The struggle to lift more citizens out of extreme poverty is an indictment of successive Nigerian governments which have mismanaged the country’s vast oil riches through incompetence and corruption. Nigeria has the largest extreme poverty population Kazeem, 2018, as show in Table 1. below.

Table I. People living in extreme poverty in Africa





Nigeria	-	-	-	-		86.9 million
India	-	-	-	-		71.5 million
D.R.C (Cong)	-	-	-	-		60.9 million
Ethiopia	-	-	-	-		23.9 million
Tanzania	-	-	-	-		19.9 million
Mozambique	-	-	-	-		17.8 million
Bangladesh	-	-	-	-		17.0 million
Kenya	-	-	-	-		14.7 million
Indonesia	-	-	-	-		14.2 million
Uganda	-	-	-	-		14.2 million

Source: Kazeem (2018)

The 86.9 million Nigerians are now living in extreme poverty represents nearly 50% of its estimated 180 million populations. As Nigeria faced a major population boom- it will become the world’s third largest country by 2050- it’s poverty problem will likely worsen. But having large swathes of people still living in extreme poverty is an Africa-wide problem, and Nigeria with rising population has become more challenging of poverty which leads to increasing levels of insecurity and underdevelopment in Nigeria.

Top 10 African countries with extreme poverty (June, 2018)

Table II: African countries living in extreme poverty

Nigeria	-	-	-	-		86.9 million
D.R Congo	-	-	-	-		60.9 million
Ethiopia	-	-	-	-		29.9 million
Tanzania	-	-	-	-		19.9 million
Mozambique	-	-	-	-		17.8 million
Kenya	-	-	-	-		14.7 million
Uganda	-	-	-	-		14.2 million
South Africa	-	-	-	-		13.8 million
South Sudan	-	-	-	-		11.4 million
Zambia	-	-	-	-		9.5 million

Source: Kazeem (2018); Quartz. Com 2018 update

Crucially, of those countries in top ten, only Ethiopia is on track to meet the United Nations SDG of ending extreme poverty by 2030. Outside the top ten, only Ghana and Mauritania are also on track with the SDG target. Indeed, of the 15 countries across the world where extreme poverty is raising per world poverty clock data, 13 are currently in Africa.

As a consequence, the mission to end extreme poverty globally is already at risk. By July, 2018, 83 million people have been lifted out of extreme poverty since January 2016- but the number is 37 million people less than required to meet the 2030 target (quarts.com, 2018).

Table III: Countries with extreme poverty population in Africa

COUNTRY	PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION IN EXTREME POVERTY	SDG STATUS
Nigeria	46.7	Poverty rising
D.R. Congo	77.0	Poverty rising
Ethiopia	23.4	On Track
Tanzania	35.0	Off Track
Mozambique	61.8	Off Track
Kenya	30.0	Off Track
Uganda	34.2	Off Track
South Africa	24.6	Off Track
South Sudan	93.0	Poverty rising
Zambia	57.2	Poverty rising

Source: Kazeem, 2018; Quartz.com 2018 update.

Poverty, Nigeria and challenges of Development: Some Explications.

Despite its vast oil riches and impressive economic growth, Nigeria has struggled without success to lift its people out of poverty over the past three decades. That fact stands out in the World Bank's 2017 Atlas of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which shows that 35 million more Nigerians were living in extreme poverty in 2013 than 1990. The Atlas tracks the progress countries are making to meet 17 sustainable development goals, set by the United Nations, such as reducing economic inequality, the use of clean energy, and literacy rates. Among the 10 most populated countries for which data are available, only Nigeria recorded an increase in the number of citizens who live in extreme poverty over the period of the study. The Atlas defines "extreme poverty" as living on less than \$1.90 a day (World Bank, 2017).

Table IV: People living in extreme poverty (less than \$1.90) per day.

	1990	2013
China	756 Million	25 Million
India	338 Million	218 Million
Indonesia	104 Million	25 Million
Pakistan	62 Million	12 Million
Nigeria	52 Million	82 Million
Bangladesh	45 Million	18 Million
Brazil	31 Million	10 Million
Ethiopia	29 Million	20 Million
Mexico	9 Million	4 Million
Russia	3 Million	0.04 Million

Source: World Bank, 2017; Atlas of Sustainable Development Goals, 2018).

While the ballooning number can be linked to a population surge in Nigeria (the country grew from 96 to 174 million people between 1990 and 2013), this increase in population account for the persistence of extreme poverty in the country. All 10% of the biggest countries in the World Bank’s report also registered population increases over that period, barring Russia. Nigeria’s 81% population increase was dwarfed by Ethiopia, which saw a 96% increase over the same period (World Bank, 2017).

Nigeria’s progress has been significantly impeded by its inability to distribute the country’s immense oil wealth to the citizens. This is corroborated by a recent report from the Legatum Institute, a London-based think-tank, which measured “Prosperity delivery” to citizens in comparison to a country’s actual wealth. Of the 38 countries covered by the research, Nigeria ranked 26th, with the report saying it was “under-delivering” prosperity to its citizens (Legatum Institute report, 2018). Corruption and incompetence are to be blame. The recent judgment awarding costs of \$93 billion against Nigeria has been yet another reminder of how much malfeasance of public officials can cost the country. Emails leaked by Anti-Corruption Charities Global Witness and Finance (2019) suggested that a \$81.3 billion payment by oil giant shell and ENI in 2011for a lucrative but underdeveloped Nigerian oil field never went to the public trust for which it was intended. Instead, almost all of the money (nearly half of that year’s national budget) was divided up as kickbacks between high ranking government officials (World Bank, 2018). The implication of all these is that development eludes the nation, given way to poverty on the faces of Nigerians.

Conclusion

This paper interrogates the problems of poverty and its effect to development in Nigeria. These challenges range from the non-involvement of citizens in the formulation of policies, lack of adequate human resources or capital, corruption and lack of credible leadership, among others. It concludes that for development to be realized there is need to take care of the challenges mentioned and every other thing that may hinder the

achievement of development in the country such as poverty. It is pertinent to note that development is not one sided but multi-dimensional which includes freedom from servitude. It is on these premises that the following recommendations are made.

Recommendations

To achieve socioeconomic development that will transform the social and economic wellbeing of the citizens and reduce poverty, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The Nigerian government must ensure that the plan for national development should be people centered. A people centred policy will go a long way to reduce poverty among the citizen and enable them contribute meaningfully to the economic growth of the country.
- ii. The leadership in the country should be corruption free and development focused to expand the resource base of the nation and increase the purchasing power of the people.
- iii. The masses should be involved at the formulation stage so as to make inputs on what concerns their lives and provide suggestions on how those inputs can be achieved.
- iv. Political leaders should analyze concretely the goal achievement-gap approach so as not to present manifestoes that would not be realized during their stay in office.
- v. There should be continuity and stability in policies so as to avoid the continuous presence of numerous abandoned projects in Nigeria. Thus, Nigerian leadership must learn to build on already existing projects rather than to abandon them for new ones for the sake of political parties and other personal interests.
- vi. Electoral processes in Nigeria should be reformed so as to promote free and fair selection process of leaders.
- vii. Local and developing industries should be encouraged by the government with all the necessary incentives to stimulate economic growth since they serve as the key to technological and industrial advancements of nation-states in the promotion of economic and reduction of poverty among citizens.
- viii. Globalization is a double-edged sword, its proper understanding and acceptance will also help in increasing development and enhance the social and economic well being of the citizens, thereby reducing poverty to its barest minimum.

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