Challenges of Poverty on National Development in Nigeria

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***Abstract*: One of the most notable challenges of economic development of any nation is poverty. This is because it is the responsibility of the leadership of any nation to carter for the welfare of its citizens. It is estimated that globally, about three billion people live below $2 per day poverty threshold and may increase to three billion people by the year 2050. A substantial number of these people living in absolute poverty are Africans. This vicious cycle of poverty among Africans is noted to 'be trans-generational and may continue unabated of appropriate strategies to combat same are not put in place. Nigeria being the most populous nation in Africa has a good share of these poverty striking Africans and has made concerted efforts since independence to tackle this poverty, cycle without achieving, the desired results. This paper attempts an explanation of the concept of poverty and its theoretical framework, the impact of poverty on Nigerian economic development, causes of poverty in Nigeria and effort made by successive governments to eradicate poverty in the country. In conclusion, some policy recommendations aimed at eradicating poverty in the country were made.**

***Key Words*: Challenges of Poverty, National Development, Nigeria's Experience.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Poverty has been acknowledged as a major global development challenge, its attack and prevalence in Africa has assumed a disturbing dimension. Africa is widely believed to be the continent with the fastest growth of poverty. In Nigeria about 86.9 million people live in severe poverty, which is about 50% of its entire population (World Bank, 2020). According to Umo (2012) in the post slavery and colonial experience, poverty is perhaps the single most widespread social pathology the continent has experienced since political independence in the 1960s. Khalid (2008) posited that one quarter of the world population continue to live in absolute poverty, unable to meet their most basic needs and surviving on less than one dollar a day (World Bank international poverty line USD1.90). Over one hundred million children of school age are denied the right to basic education in sub-Saharan Africa and the number continues to rise. Each year, about half a million women die worldwide in child birth due to lack of access to simple and affordable anti-natal health care while close to one quarter of a million children under the age of five die from malnutrition, malaria measles and other preventable diseases.

In Nigeria, the nature of the determinants of poverty can be traced to low or declining level of economic growth, income inequalities, une mployment, corruption, bad governance, diversion of funds in to non developmental project fund embezzlement, inappropria te macroeconomic policies, inadequate endowment of human capital, debt or borrowing, labour market deficiencies that were caused by limited growth in job creation, low productivity, low wages in the informal sector and poor development of human resources (Omoniyi, 2017). Poverty can also arise through structural deficiencies such as environmental degradation, worker retrenchment, frequent and increasing crime rates and violence, decrease in the real value of safety nets, structural changes in the family as well as the neglect of the agricultural sector, non-development of infrastructural facilities, lack of enabling environment for infant industries, epileptic power supply, depreciation of the Nigerian currency (naira) and the military government's inability to properly manage the Nigerian economy (Ajakaiye & Adeyeye 2001; NPC 2004).

Using poverty indicators such as literary level, access to safe drinking water, nutrition, infant and maternal mortality, ètc, Nigeria is ranked among the 25 poorest nations in the world below Kenya, Ghana and Zimbabwe (World Bank, 2002). It is estimated that three quarters of the country's population live on roughly one dollar a day, despite all efforts and resources devoted for many years to fighting poverty by successive governments in Nigeria, with the support of international donor agencies and development institutions. These unsatisfactory results call for a re-examination of the policies and practices of poverty eradication.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to World Bank (2000) and Addae-Korankye (2014) define poverty as pronounced deprivation in well-being, such that an individual does not have access to basic resources required for him or her, and it consists of several dimensions, including low income and the inability to possess basic goods and services required for survival with self-esteem. Additionally, it also encompasses lack of adequate education, poor state of health, lack of access to clean water and sanitation, loss of physical security, lack of voice, insufficient capacity and lack of opportunity to better one's own life.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) states that poverty is hunger, lack of shelter, being sick and not being able to see a doctor, not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job; rather it is fear of the future, living one day at a time. Poverty is powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom (World Bank, 1994 poverty net 2004). Poverty manifest itself through the ability of people to make themselves heard or influence or control what happens to them as a result of multiple interlocking disadvantages which makes it extremely difficult for poor people to escape poverty.

According to Duru (2008), the official definition of poverty from the Federal Government of Nigeria in the vision 2010 documents describe poverty as the inability to meet the minimum requirement of basic needs of food, health, housing, education and clothing. The generality of poor people in different countries view poverty as humiliation, the sense of being dependent and of being forced to accept rudeness, insults, and indifference when we seek help. From all of the above definitions, we can say that the nature of poverty as a prime development challenge is complex and its structure complicated.

According to Aku, Ibrahim and Bulus (2007), poverty relates to physical deprivation in terms of health, nutrition, literacy and education, disability and lack of self-confidence. Economic deprivation is the lack of access to property, income, assets, factors of production and finance, while social deprivation is the denial of socio-political and economic participation. Cultural deprivation is the lack of access to values, beliefs, knowledge, information and attitudes, which deprives people of the opportunity to control their own destinies; political deprivation is the inability to lend one's view in the political decision-making process.

Some literature shows that individuals with physical deprivation are deprived from been able to have a formal education, unable to express themselves in public or participate in social, economic or political activities. This is mostly experienced in the northern states of Nigeria; the rest of the dimensions are mostly experienced in the rural areas and some in urban areas. Rural areas are denied of access to finance, factors of production, information, knowledge and so on, while the urban population does not have the necessary facilities needed to carry out their roles because of overcrowding; the poor live in slums and individuals are denied of property, income assets and so on. However, this study was based on the definition of Aku, Ibrahim and Bulus (2007) because of multidimensional nature of the study.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

Analytically, poverty has been categorized and described in several ways with the intention of drawing attention to particular features which can lend themselves to either policy intervention or policy advocacy. According to Umo (2012) the concept of poverty includes the following:-

(a) Absolute Poverty: This is a measure of extreme poverty. It is that level of lack in which an individual cannot afford basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, clothing, basic education, etc. It is sometimes referred to as abject poverty. The absolute concept of poverty in terms of interpretation compares the person's annual income and the poverty threshold or poverty line. The poverty line is the level of income the required for basic subsistence. Using this measure, the National Bureau of Statistics estimated that 54.4% of Nigerians were absolutely poor in 2004. This translates to 81 .6milliorr Nigerians computed on the estimated population of 150 million people (2007). The 2010 poverty level was 60.9% of the population.

(b) Relative Poverty: This concept seeks to compare the extent to which one's income falls below, what the custom of the country considers needful for a reasonably decent life. One is often considered poor relative to another person. In operational terms, re1atve poverty is measured as a certain percentage (usually 50%) of the medium income of the country. Under normal circumstance relative income poverty tends to increase with the countries medium income. In development terms, relative income poverty is not as pronounced as absolute income poverty concept because it is a moving target. Data on relative income poverty are difficult to gather in most developing countries compared to developed counties.

(c) Consumption Poverty: Consumption poverty tends to measure the annual family consumption spending relative to the wellbeing or situation of the people. In other words, consumption poverty reflects a permanently poor population than income poverty as it is considered to be a more robust measurement of poverty.

(d) Capability Poverty: The Amartya defined poverty according to "capability deprivation" concept. The capability deprivation concept of poverty amounts to capability failure or lack of means for functioning in terms of what one wants to do. The example of this concept includes lack of empowerment, lack of nutritional food, or exclusion from participation in community affairs. This measurement of poverty forces policy makers to consider a range of factors that might affect the poor other than income and expenditure.

(e) Asset Poverty: The relationship between wealth or assets in the determination of the level and composition of poverty is of interest to many poverty analysts. This is because assets offer a flow of income or can be used to create opportunities to secure desirable standard of living or to bequeath to one's children. Asset poverty is of interest to many poverty analysts for the following reasons:

i. Asset poverty can be computed to show how far one's assets can go in sustaining the persons in living below or above poverty level.
ii. Some people categorized as poor may already have some degree of wealth or assets which should be taken into account by policy.
iii. A wealthy man or nation today may slip into poverty tomorrow because of erosion in the value of the assets, for example, inflation can erode one's monetary assets.

(f) Subjective Poverty: This is poverty measurement based on subjective assessment of individuals on the perception of their poverty level. Households or individuals are often asked to specify the level of income or consumption they consider to be suitable or just sufficient to allow them a minimally adequate lifestyle. Their perceptions of their economic positions or wellbeing are often related to a norm hence subjective poverty is essentially a relative poverty assessment in a way.

(g) Knowledge Poverty: Knowledge poverty is sometimes referred to as the mother of all kinds of poverty or simply called poverty of knowledge. It is a variant of asset poverty to the extent that knowledge can be regarded as a human capital asset. Full acknowledgment of the importance and implications of knowledge poverty can motivate investment in human capital so as to avert intergenerational transmission of poverty. To be knowledgeable is to be empowered about any situation and how to get out of it. Knowledge poverty can be transmitted to subsequent generations through material poverty but knowledge as an asset cannot be transferred to anybody since it is embodied in the human capital. People often die with their knowledge assets.

(h) Chronic Poverty: This describes a set of people who are poor because they cannot help themselves on a more or less permanent basis. They are destitute afflicted by physical and or mental handicaps. People in this category include orphans, the blind, the lame and people born with irremediable health defects.

(i) Transitory Poverty: The people in this category are those who were once in the non poverty category but are moved into poverty because of becoming victims of one natural disaster or another. For example people affected by earthquakes and other disasters like the tsunamis, security challenges like ethnic, religious crisis and wars, etc. These people are often assisted by emergency humanitarian agencies just to enable them get along in the struggle for survival. Ebonyi and Jimo (2002) refer to this type of poverty as Traumatic or Sporadic poverty.

Africa is the only continent where poverty and poverty related features have assumed unique patterns where over 50% of its population faces poverty. Secondly, it is the only continent where the plague of poverty has been worsened by HIV/AIDS pandemic, and thirdly, it is the continent where poverty grows together with population growth.

The intention of poverty analysis is always to draw attention of particular features that will attract policy intervention or policy advocacy.

2.2 Theoretical review

2.2 .1 Theory on vicious circle of poverty

Nurkse (1953) was the first to introduce this theory. This theory explains situation of poor families where the head of household is unable to provide the basic needs of the society such as food, clothes, shelter housing, education, health and many others (Bass, 2011). Poverty will continue to be inherited by future generations if the earlier household still unable to provide all the basic needs. Nurkse (1953) has detailed his theory through a source of income in developing countries that has not yet fully developed will cause the whole household suffered the same poverty problem. In a summary, this theory can be represented graphically.

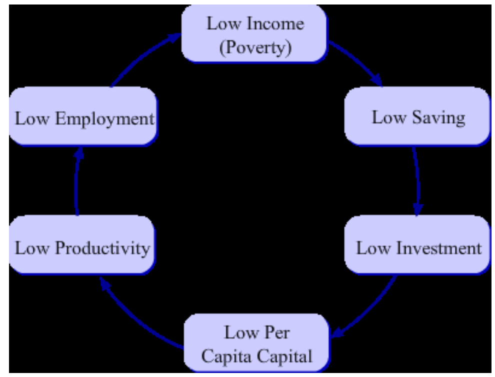

Fig. 1: Nurkse (1953) vicious circle of poverty

Fig. 1 explains vicious circle of poverty according to demand and supply side. From demand side, low income will bring about low purchasing power among the poor as a result of an equally low productive which however indirectly reduce savings and investment. Supply side on the other hand, low income can also bring about low saving power capacity which will lead to lack of capital and low productivity and eventually revert to lower revenue.

2.2.3. Culture poverty theory

The culture poverty theory was first developed by Lewis (1975) to look at the issue of poverty as a serious phenomenon throughout the world. The results of the study found that poverty becomes culture among the poor that will remain despite being in a different place and time. He believes poverty is not caused by economic factors community. He views that poverty was caused by adjustment of the poors to new living in a city. Thus, Lewis has identified cultural characteristics through his observation of the poor in his research of 4 stages. The stage begins with the society, community, family and individual.

2.2.3. Social stratification theory

If Nurkse see poverty was caused by economic factors and Lewis views it from culture and thought perspectives, Kinsley Davis in 1942 also sees poverty as a result of relative position and the different roles of both culture and thought in society (as in Abdul, Rosma and Fairus,2016). This means that the position of the poor is at the lowest level in the society structure (Valencia, 1997). The strata of society were once a very important aspect in society. For the elites, like kings and religious individuals are highly regarded, considered as important figures and respected by their society.

2.3 Empirical Literature

Osabohien, Matthew, Gershon, Ogunbiyi, and Nwosu (2019) using generalized method of moments for 15 West African countries examined agricultural development in Nigeria, in relationship with job creation and poverty alleviation. The result of the panel data for the period 2000–2016 showed that agriculture value- added have a negative impact on poverty in the selected countries. Similarly, Ogundipe, Oduntan, Adebayo and Olagunju (2016) the study examined the nexus between agricultural productivity, poverty reduction and inclusive growth in Nigeria between the period of 1991 and 2015. The study used ordinary least square and generalized method of moment's estimation techniques. The result of the study showed that food productivity index negatively and significantly affects poverty indicators.

Dada and Fanowopo (2020) used autoregressive distributed lag to examined the impact of institutions on the relationship between economic growth and poverty reduction in Nigeria using data from 1984 to 2018. The result of the study showed that economic growth and institutions (proxied by corruption control and political stability) positively affect poverty reduction both in the short run and the long run. Thus, the study found that both economic growth and strong institutions are significant factors that can be used in reducing poverty in Nigeria.

Fosu (2017) examined the role of income inequality in the transformation of economic growth to poverty reduction using data for both country specific and regional developing countries from the early 1990s. Poverty headcount ratios of 1.25 USD and 2.50 USD per day were used. The study found that the major factor driving increase and decline in poverty is the average income growth. Also, evidence showed that in states where the major driver of poverty reduction has been growth there is an opinion that more progress can be achieved when there is even distribution of income.

Aiyedogbon and Ohwofasa (2012) using ordinary least square method of analysis for data spanning 1987–2011 examined poverty and unemployment situation in Nigeria. The result of the analysis showed that poverty level in Nigeria is influenced by the contribution of unemployment, population as well as services to real GDP while the contribution of the manufacturing sector reduces poverty in the country.

According to Anyanwu J. C (2013) examined the relationship between poverty and poverty model at individual gender basis, urban and rural basis as well as at a national level. The result of the analysis using multivariate regression as well as descriptive analysis showed that household size, lack of education, not married, living in the North as well as being a Muslim contributed significantly to the tendency of an individual being poor. However, an individual living in other regions or zones of the country aside from the North, residency in the urban area, a Christian, education above secondary level as well as age reduces the tendency of being poor. Also, Aiyedogbon and Ohwofasa (2012) used ordinary least square method of analysis for data spanning 1987–2011 and examined poverty and unemployment situation in Nigeria. The result of the analysis showed that level of poverty in Nigeria is influenced by the contribution of unemployment, population as well as services to real GDP while the contribution of the manufacturing sector reduces poverty in the country.

III. POVERTY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The origin of equating economic growth with development can be traced to the United Nation's declaration of the 1960s known as the development decade (Umo 2012). Empirical research has revealed the loopholes in this proposition that at the end of the decade the growth rate target of 6% was achieved and even surpassed by some African countries like Nigeria and Liberia without making any substantial achievement on key development indices such as unemployment, inequality, poverty, etc. Several scholars have since come to the conclusion that' economic growth does not automatically guarantee economic development. Growth can only lead to improvement in these economic indices if it is reoriented in a development -friendly direction. For example if growth strategy is designed to move in pro-poor, pro-employment and pro-equity direction, though appropriate measures for it to guarantee development.

Similarly the notion that economic growth cannot co-exist with poverty reduction based on the Kuznets inverted U-hypothesis have been punctured by the following arguments:

i. The African middle class, where this exists, is not known to be great savers and investors as is the case of developed countries. A typical African middle class is more bent on serving his/her status-oriented consumption needs like buying of fancy cars, living in posh houses, etc than giving priority to savings in order to increase investment-induced growth.
ii. Globalization has facilitated the flow of foreign capital to countries, where investment opportunities exist making it possible for a nation not to depend on its domestic savings to finance investment
iii. The Kuznets's U-hypothesis has shown that it will take at least one generation (i: e 20 years) for African countries to reach a threshold income of $l, 500 from which inequality and poverty would decline. Besides the urge and impatience by African countries to develop cannot allow for this long-drawn process of trickling down growth.

A reduction in mass poverty provides the stimulus for healthy economic expansion through widespread participation in development process and the reduction in income disparities. The trade-off between growth and poverty is therefore not theoretically valid.

IV. THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON NIGERIA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

According to Khalid (2008) poverty in Nigeria was first measured in 1980 by the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) when 27.2 percent of the population or 18 million people were classified as poor by 1985, the Federal Office of Statistics estimated that 46% of Nigerians live below poverty level, but this dropped to 43% by 1992. The rate of poverty surged to 66% in 1996 and by 2008 the number stood at 70% or 90 million people. The phenomenon of poverty appears to be more concentrated in the rural than urban areas. The number of rural poor, according to the 1999 World Bank Report was roughly twice that of the urban poor. About 85% of the extremely poor, living in the rural areas with more than two third live on farming as their main occupation. Regional distribution shows that the three northern geo-political zones of north-west, north-east and north-central have the largest proportion of their population living in poverty compared to the southern zones of south-west, south-east and south-south.

According to Umo (2012), poverty line is the level of income required for basic subsistence which by the National Bureau of Statistics estimated that 54.4% of Nigerians were absolutely poor in 2004. This translates to 81.6 million Nigerians computed on an estimated population of 150 million people (2007).

Absolute poverty internationally, has been estimated at two levels using $1 per day and $ 2 per day. Based on $1 per day estimate, the World Bank has shown that poverty rate in Nigeria was 70.8% which translates to 106.2 million people based on estimated population of 150 miliion people in 2007. At $2 per day the poverty rate was 92.4% translating to 138.6 million people using the 2007 population estimate and about 154 million people using the 2012 population estimate of 167 million people.

The major challenges or causes of poverty in Nigeria include, lack of formal education, large household or family size, poor governance, corruption, high inflation, environmental degradation and high population growth. Other factors include lack of assets such as land, tools, credit and other supporting services, discrimination based on gender, race or tribes, age, disability or ill health, lack of income to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing as well as empowerment in terms of political power, confidence and dignity. All these contribute in aggravating the poverty situation of the ordinary Nigerians.

Efforts to eradicate poverty in Nigeria by successive governments were carried out through ministries/agencies of government, by collaborating with international agencies and nongovernmental organizations solely established and equipped to fight poverty and unemployment. Such programmes include: The National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Peoples Bank of Nigeria, Directorate for Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), Family Economic Advancement Programme, (FEAP), Family Support Trust Fund (FSTF), Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (NACB), National Bank for Commerce and Industry (NBCI), National Economic Reconstruction Fund(NERFUNO), etc. Th e response of various administrations to the poverty problems appears to be abhor and uncoordinated though most of the programmes had good intentions, their execution did not have significant impact or sustainable positive effect. Some of the impediments to the success of these programmes were identified as poor coordination, the absence of a comprehensive policy framework, ineffective targeting of the poor leading to leakage of benefits to unintended beneficiaries, overlapping of functions which led to institutional rivalry and conflicts, the absence of sustainable mechanisms in programmes and projects and lack of involvement of beneficiaries in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

V. CONCLUSION

At aggregate level, Nigeria's domestic poverty index was 42.7% in 1992 and had almost doubled in 2002. In terms of international poverty line of $1 per day or $2 per day benchmark, the percentages of Nigerians in poverty are, alarmingly high between 1992-2011. The National Bureau of Statistics and UNDP's Human Development report of 2011 indicated that 70.8% of the population which translated 'to about 115 million Nigerians lived on $1 per day while 92.4% translating to about 155 million people lived on $2 per day. The poverty trends in Nigeria in absolute numbers by any compares shows that Nigeria has the highest concentration of poor people in the entire African continent.

According to Umo (2012), following series of international meetings on development outcomes and economic growth in the 1990s, a consensus emerged that poverty should occupy the centre stage in all development efforts. -Motivated by the analytical work provided by the World Bank and UNDP, the - United Nations in the millennium summit of September, 2000 unanimously adopted the millennium declaration on fighting global poverty. Among the policy recommendations for implementation were as following:-

1. Eradication of Extreme Poverty and Hunger: This was directed at most African countries with very poor income and consumption indices so as to reduce incidences of malnourishment among the population which retards mental and physical development of the population.

2. Achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE): This was targeted at most African countries to achieve 100% school enrolment by 2030 among the youths. But this is still a far cry as most African countries including Nigeria with an estimated population of more than 11 million youths who are not in school and are victims of child labor and canon fodders for criminal activities.

3. Promote Gender Equality: This is to guide against discrimination against women in several areas of socio-economic and political activities and to encourage and increase the ratio of girls to boys enrolment in primary and secondary schools. Women should be encouraged and granted access to the same goals as men.

4. Child Mortality and Improved Maternal Health Care: The global mortality rate among children in most developed countries ranges between 4-7 children per 1000 and maternal mortality rate of about 400 women per 100,000 but most African countries witness figures far in excess of global average rates. The need to provide improved-health care services and improved healthy environment becomes imperative.

5. Combat HIV/AIDS and other Diseases: Combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases will reduce the tendency of untimely death which affects the population and undermines productivity.

6. Ensure Environmental Sustainability: The misuse of the environment by most African countries creates problems that worsen the environmental resources. Environmental degradation virtually destroys the ecosystem and economic life of the people thereby making them very poor. For instances of such ranges from over reliance on firewood for domestic energy to gas flaring, poor agricultural practices, environmental pollution, desert en croachment, etc. Sustainable reservation of the environment will safeguard the environmental resources which constitute the blackbodies of the national economy.

7. Global Partnership for Development: The indicator used for measuring global partnership is the development and use of ICT per 100 people. Only very few African countries achieved 10% penetration as per 2008 assessment. Most development in Africa, Nigeria inclusive comes by way of external aids either in financial or technical form or both. African countries lose most of their financial resources to either capital flight or payments of external debts. Encouragement of global partnership can bring about increase in external aids and Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) which will go a long way in mitigating poverty'. It is clear that the benchmark dateline set by the MDG cannot be achieved by Nigeria and most other African countries. Reasons for failure to achieve the set targets in poverty reduction or eradication vary from one country to another depending on the peculiarities of their problems.

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