



POVERTY AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION: THE DILEMMA OF NIGERIANS

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Abstract

Poverty is an enemy of man; it humiliates and dehumanizes its victim. This paper looks at poverty and poverty alleviation in Nigeria. It sees poverty as a condition where an individual or organization experiences a situation of lack, a situation with little or no resources to acquire the basic necessities of life. The paper asserts that poverty in Nigeria has gone beyond the levels of absolute poverty and relative poverty and currently at the level of poverty qua poverty. It goes further to look at the concepts of poverty and poverty alleviation. The impressionistic efforts at poverty alleviation were identified and discussed. Challenges of poverty alleviation were identified and the dilemma of poverty on Nigerians was discussed. Recommendations to mitigate the challenges were offered. The paper concludes that urgent actions should be taken by government to address the issues of poverty in Nigeria in order to avoid an impending catastrophic situation.

Key Words: *Corruption, Re-orientation, Value-System, Unproductive-population, Finance.*

INTRODUCTION

**NIGERIA: Great Nation,
Good People, Bad Leaders
(ASUU)**

Nigerian poverty and poverty alleviation scenario is a very pathetic case. Poverty and poverty alleviation tangle together as the latter necessitates the former. Poverty is not confined to a section of the Nigerian society. From North to South, East to West, many people are in shackles and are ravaged by hunger, unemployment, destructive epileptic electricity supply (where they are available), infected drinking water in the midst of abundance. Nigerians suffer from untarred roads, deadly drum-holes, uncleared drainage system, irregular educational system, corrupt public service, non-functional hospitals, diseases, insecurity and recently unguarded faceless and inhuman deregulation policies of the federal government. It is not surprising that Nigeria is rated number 16th out of 178 in the Failed States Index 2013, placed in 153rd out of 187 in Human Development Index 2013 as revealed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2013). Nigeria is rated number 8th most corruption nation by the Anti-corruption nonprofit Transparency International, TI, in its 2013 Global Corruption Barometer which surveyed residents in 107 countries (<http://saharareporters.com/news-page/nigeria-rated-8th-most-corrupt-nation-pm-news-lagos>).

As the effect of poverty on Nigerians can be better imagined than experience, it is true that the federal government has attempted severally to curb poverty through the setting up of various specialized agencies and programmes. Unfortunately, the supposed poverty alleviation agencies have not been able to make any positive impact on the citizens due to lack of adequate funding by government. These agencies have become conduit pipes for the wastage of public funds and also an avenue for the operators and government officials to further enrich themselves at the expense of the poor majority of Nigerians.

Poverty is becoming widely recognized as inhuman and takes various forms including the lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihood, hunger and malnutrition, ill health, limited access to education and other basic services, increased morbidity and disease – related mortality, homelessness and inadequate housing, unsafe environments, and social discrimination and exclusion (Ogwuma, 1999).

The major thrust of this paper is the dilemma of poverty on Nigerians. In order to achieve this, the paper looks at the theoretical foundations of poverty and poverty alleviation. Factors responsible for the escalation of poverty in Nigeria and the impressionistic efforts at poverty alleviation were identified and discussed. The challenges of poverty alleviation were identified and recommendations to mitigate the challenges were offered.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Defining Poverty

Poverty, like every other social concept is bedeviled with a plethora of definitions, some of which are given here for proper understanding of this paper. Most commonly, poverty is defined as “a state of being in which we are unable to meet our needs” (Watt, 2000:15). Poverty is scarcity, dearth, or the state of one who lacks a certain amount of material possessions



or money (Merriam-Webster, 2013). Absolute poverty or destitution refers to the deprivation of basic human needs, which commonly includes food, water, sanitation, clothing, shelter, health care and education (The World Bank. 2011). Relative poverty is defined contextually as economic inequality in the location or society in which people live (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2009).

Baratz and Grisgby defined poverty as a “condition involving some deprivations and adverse occurrences that are closely (but not necessarily exclusively) associated with inadequate economic resources” (Baratz and Grisgby, 1972). According to Edozien poverty is “inadequacy of income to support a minimum standard of living” (Edozien: 1975:35). Using the concept of relative deprivation, Townsend says: Individual, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies in which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities” (Townsend, 1979:31)

According to Ikejiaku, poverty in Nigeria has degenerated to the level of *Poverty qua poverty* which is a situation no human being would be contented with, because of the agonizing pains that follow the lack of the basic needs. Therefore, people in most cases react negatively to such situation, in order to show their grievances and discontent, particularly when the government is corrupt (Ikejiaku, 2009:15) as is the case with the Nigerian leaders.

The writer of this paper is fully in agreement with Ikejiaku when he said that poverty in Nigeria is at the level of *poverty qua poverty*, but define *poverty qua poverty* as “a situation where the majority of Nigerian citizens do not enjoy the basic needs of life; they do not have any hope of enjoying same; they are dehumanized, dejected and hopeless; they are staring at death and death is staring at them. In order not allow death overwhelms them, they become daring, militarized and hardened as coping mechanisms for survival”. It is the submission of this writer that this is one of the major reasons for the very high rate of insecurity in Nigeria.

Defining Poverty Alleviation

Poverty alleviation refers to all the methods, ways or techniques adopted by government, non-governmental organizations or wealthy individuals to reduce or eradicate poverty from a collectivity. Poverty alleviation/eradication is best approached as an exercise in raising people’s capabilities or enhancing freedoms. The corollary of this approach to development is empowerment, which is, helping people in poverty to acquire the tools they need to meet their basic needs as the long-term solution to poverty.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is squarely situated on the Basic Needs Theory. Therefore, the Basic Needs Theory can be interpreted essentially in four ways viz: (1) the provision of people’s minimum requirements for water, housing, clothing, food and sanitation; (2) allowing people to define their own wants rather than what is stated by experts or professional bodies; (3) ability to oppose the buyers’ rationality for government intervention in education, water and sanitation, and guidance in consumption; (4) liberty of the people to express themselves through personal and group participation in planning and implementation of projects (Iyoha, 1999:65).

It is germane to state here that majority of Nigerians are not looking forward to a luxurious living, but interested in the provision of the basic necessities of life by the government at all levels of governance. Consequently, it is our belief that when the basic needs of the ordinary people are provided by the government, poverty would be eradicated or properly alleviated.

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NIGERIA: Rich Country, Poor People

Poverty in Nigeria

A member of the ruling political party and former Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has described the widening gap between the rich and the poor across the country as a dangerous omen. He warned that except urgent steps were taken to reverse the trend, the development might compound the security situation in the country.

According to him:

.....The said picture is one of at least two-third of Nigerians live below the poverty level. It is a dangerous situation. Our country is in danger of an impending clash between a rapacious



*and conspicuous consuming upper class and worsening wretchedness of the classes below.
Now is the time to save the many poor if the few rich are to live (Odujirin, 2013).*

Furthermore, he said:

.....A corresponding sinful display of ill-gotten riches, big houses, big cars, lavish parties by the leaders are provoking the envy and possibly anger of the dispossessed in the land (Odujirin, 2013).

Poverty in Nigeria has gone beyond the level of absolute poverty to the level of *poverty qua poverty*, a term being popularized by Ikejiaku to describe the practical absolute poverty where the majority find life excruciating because it is difficult to meet or satisfy their basic needs, such as food, clothing, shelter and education beyond primary school level. It is pathetic that an average Nigerian has grown poorer over the past decades, notwithstanding the enormous natural resources available in the country. The poverty level in Nigeria is worsening as unemployment is soaring on daily basis. The quality of education (for example, public universities have been on strike for almost six months now), health and other social services is dwindling all over the country. The agricultural, general merchandising and other social services which, hitherto, provided employment for the ordinary citizens have become very unattractive.

Regrettably, The World Bank Country Director for Nigeria, Marie-Francoise Marie-Nelly said:

.....About 100 million Nigerians live in destitution and that the bank's ongoing commitment to Nigeria stood at \$5.34bn. (Marie-Nelly, 2013).

According to the World Bank boss:

.....the number of Nigerians living in destitution makes up 8.33 per cent of the total number of people living in destitution all over the world. She said, "1.2 billion people live in destitution out of which 100 million are Nigerians. In Nigeria, 63 per cent of the population lives on less than \$1.25 a day (Marie-Nelly, 2013).

Poverty in Nigeria was first measured in 1980 by the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS), when 27.2 per cent of the population, or 18 million people, were classified as poor. By 1985, the Federal Office of Statistics estimated that about 46 per cent of Nigerians live below poverty level but it dropped to 43 per cent by 1992. This rate surged to 66 per cent in a 1996 survey and the total number of poor nearly quadrupled, to 67 million (UNDP 1986). Estimates put the poverty rate today at close to 70 per cent, or 90 million people. Perhaps 40 per cent of these people are the "core" poor", so impoverished that they cannot meet their basic food needs, and indeed, the stunting rate for young Nigerian children, a measure of chronic nutritional deprivation and food insecurity, stands at 42 per cent (NICEF, 2003).

The phenomenon of poverty appears to be more concentrated in the rural than in the urban areas of the country. The number of rural poor, according to the 1999 World Bank Report, is roughly twice that of the urban poor. Of the extremely poor, 85 per cent live in the rural areas and more than two-thirds live in the farms. The distribution of poverty is also inequitable on a geographic basis. Regionally the North-West geopolitical zone has the largest proportion of its population living in poverty, and the three northern geo-political zones have 65 per cent of the nation's population but account for only 35 per cent of GDP. The 1997 National Consumer Survey indicated that the average family expenditure per month for the country was N4,058.00. Out of the country's six geo-political zones, the North West zone had the least figure N2,941. The Eastern zone had the highest figure of N5,194.00, almost double the figure for the North-West zone. Also, the North West zone recorded the lowest figure of household income (N3,769), while the highest figure of N7,213 came from the South Eastern zone. The level of poverty in the zone is striking indeed. About 54.2 per cent of the inhabitants of the zone live below the poverty line. The North-West came second only to North-East which recorded 55.8 per cent on the poverty scale (World Bank, 2001). No part of the country is exempted from poverty, because severe poverty is also experienced in the Southern regions. Lack of formal education, large household size, living in a rural area and pursuing an agricultural livelihood are strongly associated with poverty in Nigeria.

The National Bureau of Statistics stated that 112.519 million Nigerians live in relative poverty conditions. This is staggering when compared with the country's estimated 167 million population. Relative poverty is the comparison of the living standards of people living in a given society within a specified period of time. It is the most acceptable poverty measurement which has been adopted by the NBS for many years. Apart from the relative poverty index, other poverty measurement standards are absolute measure, which puts the country's poverty rate at 99.284 million or 60.9 per cent; the dollar per day measure, which puts the poverty rate at 61.2 per cent; and the subjective poverty measure, which puts the poverty level at 93.9 per cent. Instructively, all the four methods used in measuring poverty by the NBS pointed to the fact that there was disconnect between the country's Gross Domestic Product growth rate of 7.75 per cent and the high poverty rate. The



relative poverty figure of 112.5 million, which was contained in the 2010 poverty profile report of the agency, represents 69 per cent of the country's total population. The 26-page report, which provides details of poverty and income distribution across the country, put the 2004 poverty measurement rate at 54.4 per cent. The Statistician-General of the NBS, Yemi Kale, while unveiling the report, noted that the figure might increase to 71.5 per cent when the 2011 figure is computed.

According to the report, the North-West and North-East recorded the highest poverty rates in the country in 2010 with 77.7 per cent and 76.3 per cent respectively. On the other hand, the South-West geo-political zone, recorded the lowest at 59.1 per cent. Among the 36 states of the federation, the report stated that Sokoto had the highest poverty rate (86.4 per cent), while Niger had the lowest at (43.6, per cent). As at 2004, Jigawa State had the highest poverty rate (95 per cent), while Anambra, with a poverty rate of 22 per cent, was the least poverty-stricken state. Kale said, "In 2004, Nigeria's relative poverty measurement stood at 54.4 per cent but increased to 69 per cent or 112.518 million Nigerians in 2010. Using the absolute poverty measurement, 54.7 per cent of Nigerians were living in poverty in 2004 but this increased to 60.9 per cent or 99.284 million Nigerians in 2010 (NBS, 2010). "It remains a paradox to note, that despite the fact that the Nigerian economy is growing, the proportion of Nigerians living in poverty is increasing every year

Unemployment situation in the country which became manifest in the early 1980s has assumed crisis level since the 1990s and has worsened the level of poverty. Cumulatively, Nigeria produced a total of 1,110,000 graduates from tertiary institutions between 1985 and 1996 alone (Abdulrahman, 1999). It was observed that less than 100,000 of this number got formal jobs which suggest that one million might be openly unemployed or under-employed for the same period. The situation today has not only tripled, but also, unimaginable.

Factors responsible for Continuous poverty in Nigeria

Speaking recently during a conference on effective strategies for reducing poverty and scaling up implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nigeria, organized by the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), the

Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Mallam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi said:

.....Bad governance and its attendant misplaced priorities, corruption and huge debt burden are responsible for the continuous poverty in Nigeria. He also, gave non-competitiveness of Nigerian goods in the international markets, few economic opportunities, conflict and violence, low productivity, high rate of population growth, and suboptimal human capital as part of the poverty problem in the country (Sanusi, 2013).

Speaking further, he said:

..... poverty in Nigeria is mostly in the rural and peri-urban areas, which is as a result of poor linkages to the urban sector, lack of access to productive input, environmental degradation, slow agricultural growth and poor infrastructural facilities (Sanusi, 2013).

In the 10th Conference of the National Economic Summit Group that was held to study, analyze Nigerian economy and consider ways out of its log jam, Paul Collier of Oxford University posited that:

.....the vast resources available to Nigeria have been used unproductively to support an elite class who does nothing but gained so much from economic rent open to the class through access to those in authority, while the majority of the population have floundered into a (poverty) condition than that found elsewhere in Africa (CBN Monthly Report, July Edition).

The position of Paul Collier was further corroborated by Steve Azaiki in his Inequalities in Nigerian Politics, when he observed that:

.....the exploration arm of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation and the Nigerian Petroleum Development Company established in the 1980s has suffered a stunted growth, unlike similar bodies in Libya. Even the oil wells and fields the company developed in the late 1980s have been turned over to some major foreign firms and local operators owned by powerful military officers and their cronies. Regrettably, therefore, after over 50 years of oil business in the country, Nigerians do not control up to 1% of aggregate assets (Azaiki, 2003).

Specifically, the major causes of poverty in Nigeria include, but not limited to the following:

- Discovery of crude oil and other petroleum products in large quantity;
- Corruption by political parties, public office holders and bureaucrats;



- Jumbo pay to political office holders. 40% of the national budget goes to only 469 national assembly legislators;
- Bad governance;
- Non-availability of power (electricity supply);
- Poor educational system right from the primary to the tertiary levels due to gross underfunding by government;
- High unproductive population due to lack of infrastructures to engage the unemployed;
- Abandonment of the agricultural sector of the economy.

POVERTY ALLEVIATION EFFORTS BY GOVERNMENT

IN NIGERIA: The nearer to oil wells, the poorer you are

Reducing poverty is the fundamental objective of economic development. Poverty alleviation programmes are necessary due to the scourge that crept into the nation economy, especially among the rural folks. Is it not surprising that Nigeria with all her resources (human, material and natural resources) cannot feed well as a result of poverty?

In attempt to help Nigeria alleviate its poverty status, the World Bank Country Representative Marie-Nelly said:

.....although the World Bank was the largest overseas development agency that provided assistance to Nigeria, the contribution of the organization to the country was very small compared to the budgets of the states and the Federal Government. She said if the World Bank's small assistance could produce so much result because of effective implementation and monitoring, the revenues accruable to the country could do much more if they were similarly utilized. Giving a more graphic picture of the World Bank's credit to Nigeria in relation to revenues accruing to the nation, Marie-Nelly said while the bank's total commitment to Nigeria amounted to \$4.67bn by 2012, the budget of the states and Federal Government amounted to \$64.05bn in the same year. According to her, the World Bank's portfolio amounted to \$5.34bn as of June 2013, while the budget of the Federal Government alone for 2013 amounted to \$31.17bn. She said the bank had shifted from being Federal Government centric to a more balanced federal and state level support. She said the annual Country Programme Portfolio Review, which the bank undertakes with various governments, was necessary to assess the progress in achieving the development objectives as well as the quality of implementation of the projects (Marie-Nelly, 2013).

Simply put, the implication of the above statement is that corruption which has been the bane of growth and sustainable development in Nigeria, has remained and may continue to remain, unless urgent steps are taking to aggressively address the issue in Nigeria. The high level of corruption of the leaders has reduced majority of Nigerians to moving corpses waiting to be buried anytime and anywhere.

However, successive governments in Nigeria have consistently made impressionistic efforts at poverty alleviation as they have tried different policies and programmes geared towards reducing the level of poverty in the society through a number of ways. First, through the activities of its ministries/agencies; second, by collaborating with international agencies; third, and more importantly, through the establishment of agencies equipped solely to fight rising poverty and unemployment in Nigeria. The Joda Panel, established at the inception of the civilian administration of Obasanjo to review the various poverty eradication programmes of the previous regimes, identified twenty two such institutions. The various programmes are listed hereunder according to their functions:

(A) Programmes for Agricultural Employment:

Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank Ltd (NACB)
Nigerian Agricultural Insurance Corporation (NAIC)
National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA)
Federal Agricultural Coordinating Unit (FACU)
Agricultural Projects Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (APMEU)
Federal Ministries of Agriculture, Water Resources and Power and Steel

(B) Programmes for skill acquisition due to the deficiency in the educational system

National Directorate of Employment (NDE)



(C) Programmes for the provision of loans for economic empowerment

Peoples Bank of Nigeria (PBN)
Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP)
Family Support Trust Fund (FSTF)
Nigerian Bank for Commerce and Industry (NBCI)
Nigerian Industrial Development Bank (NIDB)
Nigerian Export-Import Bank
National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND)

(D) Non-formal education programmes

National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE)
National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education

(E) Health Programme

National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA)

(F) Rural development programmes

Directorate for Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFFRI)
Federal Department of Rural Development (FDRD)
River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs)
Industrial Development Centre (IDC)

(G) Women development programme

National Centre for Women Development (CWD).

Despite the multitude of poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria, it is ironical, unfortunate, regrettable and painful to state that these programmes were planned to fail *abinitio*, because the top-bottom approach to planning and implementation was adopted in virtually all the programmes. The bottom-up approach which is more participatory, pervasive and inclusive is not recognized by Nigerian leaders and policy makers. In addition to the above, various environmental and Nigerian factors/challenges have also affected the proper implementation of the programmes. Consequently, the various programmes have not been able and are not able to alleviate the poverty of Nigerians.

CHALLENGES OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN NIGERIA

**NIGERIA: Bastion of culture,
now exporter of prostitutes**

The challenges of poverty alleviation in Nigeria are multidimensional, multifarious and in-exhaustive due to plethora of factors. However, for the purpose of this paper the following few challenges are identified and discussed:

1. **Corruption:** This is the major bane of poverty alleviation in Nigeria. It is in Nigeria that leaders will loot the treasury of the nation, that is, commonwealth of the people and take such loot to further develop the economies of the rich nations that are already developed. It is in Nigeria that leaders will loot the treasury and save for their great, great grandchildren that they are not sure of. Public funds that would have been used to positively affect the lives of the people are taken away from the economy by the leaders to develop other economies of the world at the expense of Nigerians. Nigeria which was one of the 50 richest countries globally in the 1970s is now one of the 25 poorest countries in the world presently due to leadership failure and corruption.
2. **Bad governance:** Majority of the political leaders in Nigeria are unfortunately charlatans, drop-outs, never do wells, ballot box snatchers, expired/worn out personalities who have been in power from the colonial era till date. Those who took over leadership of the country from the colonial masters in 1960 are still holding on to power. The few that are retiring are replacing themselves with their unskilled and unproductive children that were poorly or badly groomed and bereft of ideals, vision and mission, and therefore, are not in position to discuss or operationalize good governance. To ascend to leadership position in Nigeria, you must belong to the cabal or the mafia group or having a willing godfather who will support you;
3. **Destructive epileptic Electricity supply:** The supply of the needed electricity or power for the cottage industry is not only destructive, but also epileptic whenever it is provided. In most cases and times, electricity is



unavailable and the cost of running generating sets to provide personal electricity is not only expensive, but also excruciating. Any effort at poverty alleviation without the needed infrastructure will be counter-productive;

4. **Lack of proper education:** Education in Nigeria from the recent past till date is purely theoretically based. Laboratories and workshops for practical exercises are either ill-equipped or non-existent. Consequently, graduates of Nigerian tertiary institutions are only equipped with theories without any practical orientation due to inadequacy or unavailability of the needed equipment for teaching and learning. It was in recognition of this deficiency that the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was established to equip the graduates with the needed skills to alleviate their poverty and survive in life. Ironically, the effect of this poverty alleviation programme is yet to be positively felt by majority of Nigerians, just like other programmes;
5. **Mono-economy:** Nigeria relies mainly on its mono-economic status with oil accounting for almost 90% of the country's income. Oil has destroyed the creativity of Nigerian leaders and has also reduced other sectors of the economy to the background. Consequently, every Nigerian wants to part-take in the oil wealth and those that are unable to do so are subjected to poverty, and efforts made to alleviate their poverty are otiosified by Nigerian factors and other factors;
6. **Value system:** In the 1940s, 50s, 60s, 70s up to the mid-1980s, the value system in Nigeria used to revolve around: morality, spirituality, proper up-bringing, respect for elders and others, proper education and so on. Unfortunately, somewhere along the line of development, all these have been lost to modernity. The value system today is money, not just money..... real money, big money. A young man wants to gain admission into the university today, graduate tomorrow, work in Shell Petroleum Development Company the next day and buy a private jet the next day. It is a major challenge to attempt to alleviate the poverty of a person who does not believe that he is poor and who wants to become a millionaire overnight;
7. **Large unproductive population:** Nigeria has a very large unproductive population due to many factors, among which are: unemployment, unskilled labour, lack of industries, value system, and corruption by the leaders and so on. According to the Statistician-General of the National Bureau of Statistics, Yemi Kale, 112,519 million Nigerians live in relative poverty conditions. Out of an estimated population of 167 million Nigerians as at 2010, 112,519 are said to be poor. This means that only 54,481 million Nigerians are living slightly above poverty line. Even the so-called rich Nigerians are poor because when you aggregate their wealth by the population, you will discover that they are also poor. In this kind of situation, how can any poverty alleviation programme succeed?;
8. **Government Policies:** Government poor policy implementation is a contributive factor to the high rate of poverty and poverty alleviation especially in the rural areas in Nigeria;
9. (9) **Finance:** Finance militates against the actualization or realization of poverty alleviation programmes or activities especially in the rural areas in Nigeria.

THE DILEMMA OF POVERTY ON NIGERIANS

Oil: A Curse to Nigeria

Nigerians have no reason to be poor because of the abundance of human and natural resources including oil and gas available in the country. For instance, Nigeria realized the sum \$300 billion from crude oil between 1970 and 1990. In addition, the government earned the total sum of N998.4 billion from crude oil in 2003, yet nothing meaningful to show in terms of development (Ikelegbe, 2004). Nigeria is Africa's largest oil exporter, and the world's 10th largest oil producer, accounting for more than 2.2 million barrels a day in 2011. Oil revenues totaled \$50.3 billion in 2011 and generated 70 percent of government revenues, yet poverty is increasing yearly.

- It is unimaginable, regrettable, unfortunate and embarrassing for Nigeria and Nigerians to be at the level of *poverty qua poverty* despite the abundant human and material resources available in the country;
- Majority of Nigerians are subjected to all forms of inhuman treatment, hence the high rate of brain drain or exodus of many to other countries of the world in search of greener pasture;
- Getting employment in Nigeria is not only luxurious but also a special privilege. You must belong to the ruling class or be close to those in the ruling class. This is popularly called: *ima madu or ima onye ma madu* (meaning, knowing somebody or knowing somebody who knows somebody);



- Majority of Nigerians are suffering from lack of the basic necessities of life, no road, no water, no electricity, no employment, shelter and food are expensive;
- Good education is exclusively for the rich. Public universities lecturers have been on strike for about six months now due to governments' insensitive to the yearnings and aspirations of the lecturers. Also, public universities have become glorified secondary schools. The best university in Nigeria – Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) is No 3,263 in the world university ranking. Only about 8% of the national budget goes to education sector as against 26% recommended by UNESCO. Nigerian leaders do not fund education because their children attend schools outside the country;
- The hospitals have become glorified clinics that cannot treat the leaders of any ailment. They travel to Germany, London, India and other countries to procure paracetamol tablets for ordinary headache, leaving the majority to their fate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To put the nation on the part of growth and sustainable development, government must play the catalytic role of midwifing the economy. In order to realize this, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. Oil is expected to be a blessing to any community or country where it is found, but the reverse is the case in Nigeria. The present position where oil revenue to the nation is unknown, and powerful Nigerians and their foreign collaborators have turned themselves into oil thieves should be urgently addressed by the government to enable Nigerians benefit from the product which is God given;
2. Corruption agencies in Nigeria should be given the free hands to perform their functions of fighting and reducing corruption to the barest minimum;
3. The legislative arm of government in Nigeria should be re-structured to run on a part-time basis, and their salaries and wages reduced to the barest minimum to discourage corrupt and non credible persons from taking part. The Executive Presidential system being practiced presently is too expensive for the country; therefore, I strongly recommend the parliamentary system for the nation;
4. Merit should be the basis for acquiring leadership position and not through godfatherism;
5. Government should as a matter of urgency provide the necessary and needed infrastructures such as electricity, water, road, health care, housing, food and shelter, employment and so on for the citizens to alleviate poverty in Nigeria;
6. The education sector should be properly funded in line with UNESCO standard;
7. The economy should be diversified in order to attract more revenue to the federation account;
8. Government should establish commerce and cottage industries, and also, create the enabling environment for the private sector to provide gainful employment to the inhabitants of the rural areas in order to aid the pace of business growth in the locality and encourage urban – rural migration;
9. There is need to mobilize government officials, poverty alleviation agencies and concerned Nigerians for proper planning and implementation of poverty alleviation programmes to be people-centred;
10. There should be effective and efficient communication between government policy makers and the community leaders and followers in projects planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, especially in the rural areas as this will engender growth and sustainable development that will eliminate poverty.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it has been established that poverty is an enemy of man as it humiliates and dehumanizes its victim. The paper looked at poverty and poverty alleviation in Nigeria. It saw poverty as a condition where an individual or organization experiences a situation of lack, a situation with little or no resources to acquire the basic necessities of life. The paper asserted that poverty in Nigeria has gone beyond the levels of abject poverty, absolute poverty, and extreme poverty and currently at the level of poverty qua poverty. The impressionistic efforts at poverty alleviation were identified and discussed. The paper went further to look at the concepts of poverty and poverty alleviation. The challenges of poverty alleviation were identified; the dilemma of poverty on Nigerians was discussed, and recommendations to mitigate the challenges were offered. The paper concludes that urgent actions should be taken by government to address the issues of poverty in Nigeria in order to avoid an impending catastrophic situation.

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