

Governance and Poverty Reduction in Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a global issue. It is estimated that almost half the world — over 3 billion people — live on less than \$2.50 a day (Shah, 2013). The GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of the 41 Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (567 million people) is less than the wealth of the world's 7 richest people combined. Nearly a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their names (Shah, 2013). Less than one per cent of what the world spent every year on weapons was needed to put every child into school by the year 2000 and yet it didn't happen. 1 billion children live in poverty (1 in 2 children in the world). 640 million live without adequate shelter, 400 million have no access to safe water, and 270 million have no access to health services. 10.6 million died in 2003 before they reached the age of 5 (or roughly 29,000 children per day) (Shah, 2013).

Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA) is afflicted by many forms of poverty. The poverty situation in Sub-Saharan African countries is precarious given the percentage of people living below \$ 1 a day. The use of socio-economic indicators like per capita income, life expectancy at birth (years), access to health care services, access to safe water, access to education and access to sanitation facilities also depicts the extent of poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa (Adeyemi, Ijaiya, and Raheem, 2009:166). HDI scores in most countries of SSA have stagnated or declined since 1990, leaving the region as the poorest in the world. Indeed, 28 of the 31 low human development countries are in SSA (UNDP, 2006: 265). Since 1990, income poverty has fallen in all regions of the world except SSA, where there has been an increase both in the incidence and absolute number of people living in income poverty (Handley, Haggins, Sharma, Bird and Cammack, 2009:1). This sees some 300 million people in SSA – almost half of the region's population – living on less than US\$1 a day (UNDP, 2006: 269).

In Nigeria, an estimated 126 million out of the country's 168.8million (as estimated in 2012) people live on less than N220.00 or USD1.25 per day. The enormous wealth in the country has not impacted positively on the well-being of the citizens. (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL>; Sen, 2010). Despite the average GDP per capita, for a developing African nation, much of the Nigeria's population suffers from extreme poverty. Nigeria ranked 151 out of 177 countries in the United Nations Development Index in 2004. Nigeria was ranked 158th on the United Nations' Human Poverty Index and over 50% of the population are living below \$1 per day. In 2010, Nigeria ranked 159th out of 177countries in Human Development Index (Odularu, 2008:3; Ogunkua 2011). The disparity between GDP per capita and the number of people living below \$1 per day illustrates the enormous income gap in the country. Available data from the Harmonized Nigeria Living Standard Survey (HNLSS) 2009/2010, which remains the follow-up to the Nigeria Living Standard Survey (NLSS) 2003/2004, conducted by the NBS(National Bureau of Statistics) reveals that efforts to alleviate poverty was not satisfactory. For instance, relative poverty and absolute poverty rates increased to 69.0% and 60.9% in 2010 respectively from 54.4% and 54.7% in 2004(2011 Annual Performance Report:38). According to the National Bureau of Statistics, 112.519 million Nigerians live in relative poverty conditions while other poverty measurement standard, absolute measure, which puts the country's poverty rate at 99.284 million or 60.9 per cent (Onuba, 2012).

Despite the massive revenue from oil, 69 percent of over 100 million Nigerians were living within the poverty bracket. Nigeria had been unable to translate the huge natural resources at her disposal to the improvement of her citizens' living standard. According to the former World Bank Vice President and a former Minister for Education, Ezekwesili (cited in The Punch, 2013), "Nigeria has therefore tragically failed to translate her rich resource endowment to improvement in the standard of living of her citizens hence we today have 69 percent of over 100 million of our citizens in the poverty bracket ". The rising level of poverty in the country has been attributed to poor governance. Evidence of terribly poor governance in Nigeria is palpable. It manifested in the corrupt, inept political leadership and weak civil institutions to dilapidated infrastructure, insecurity and mass poverty in the midst of opulence (www.punchng.com/editorial/reversing-poor-governance-and-poverty/). Our successive governments have similarly acknowledged our predicament and sometimes penned "home-grown" programmes that cost enormous time and money to produce. The critical difference between Nigeria and other developing countries however has been the unmitigated failure here to adopt good governance practices: faithfully implement plans and build strong institutions that can drive and sustain rapid development (www.punchng.com/editorial/reversing-poor-governance-and-poverty/). Ezekwesili (The Punch, 2013) submitted that Nigeria is the best known example of the African paradox of a land so rich in natural resources, but where the majority of the people are poor. She located the source of the mass poverty in poor governance, she recalled how corruption and economic mismanagement have condemned 69 per cent of the populace to poverty, while the Asian economies have galloped ahead (The Punch, 2013).

Governance has become a key issue in the discourse on poverty. Governance provides the institutional, legal and political framework not only for the design of poverty reduction policies but also for the enhancement of the capacity of the poor to deal positively with and improve their material conditions. Governance ensures the participation of the poor in decisions that affects them and empowers them to get their views on the policy agenda (Adejumobi, 2006:3-4). In its "Poverty Report", for the year 2000, the UNDP has noted the importance of governance as "the missing link" in the fight against poverty. Governments may write good plans for poverty reduction, raise revenue to implement such plans and even identify targets and yet fail to deliver anything tangible in terms of poverty-reduction. The "missing link" here is responsive and accountable institutions between anti-poverty efforts and poverty reduction. To get poverty reduction fully on the agenda of public policy, good governance is needed to enhance the capacity of the government to deliver and to be accountable for the resources at its disposal (Nyong'o, 2001:8).

This paper examines the roles of governance in Poverty reduction. The specific objectives of this study are to

- a. describe the manifestations of poverty in Nigeria.
- b. examine the various strategies of poverty reduction employed by governments in Nigeria.
- c. consider the prospects for poverty reduction in Nigeria.

The study employs secondary source of data with the use of Publications, seminar and conference papers, Newspapers, journals, textbooks and the internet. Data collected were descriptively analysed.

Many scholars aired their opinion on the concepts, causes and effects of poverty in Nigeria, but this study focuses on the role on governance in poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

Conceptual overview of Poverty and Governance

Poverty has defied a universal definition and has been subject to controversy among social scientists. Thus, whereas some people would want to measure poverty by setting a standard above which poverty ends and below which it begins, others would prefer to treat it as a relative concept to be determined by the prevailing style of living that is reasonable and acceptable among the people of a given society (Nnaemeka, 2013). Obadan (1997:2) posited that poverty can be viewed from an economic perspective as a situation of low income and or low consumption. This approach has often been used for constructing poverty lines, which represent the values of income or consumption necessary to purchase the minimum standard of nutrition and other necessities of life. Going by this definition, people are said to be poor when their measured standard of living, calculated in terms of their incomes of their consumption pattern, fall below the poverty line. The poverty line is an imaginary index that is used to separate the poor (<http://Articlesng.com/poverty-nigeria-poverty-reduction-programme-nigeria/>).

Many writers assert that there are two main types of poverty. These are absolute poverty and relative poverty. With absolute poverty people generally do not have what they need. They are short of basic foodstuff, shelter, clothing and adequate or sufficient health care.

On the other hand just like beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder, poverty may be viewed to be a subjective term and what is poverty to someone may not be poverty to someone else. What is poverty under relative terms is viewed as being what some people lack in relation to other people. Under relative poverty measures, a mean level of income may be established under which a person may be considered to be living in poverty. Anyone living above that level may be considered not to be living in poverty." (economybuilding.wordpress.com/2011/10/13/poverty-top-three-causes/). Relative poverty according to Aliyu (<http://Articlesng.com/poverty-nigeria-poverty-reduction-programme-nigeria/>) "is a situation where an individual or group of people can be said to have access to his or their basic needs, but is comparatively poor among persons or the generally of the community".

There are different definitions of governance put forward by scholars, bilateral and multilateral leading agencies. Lutz and Linder (2004) described governance basically as about how power is exercised and how important decisions in a society are taken. The emphasis is about the institutions and their performance. Ikpi (Oyedele,2012:4) defines governance as "the total ability to organise, synthesise and direct the various actions of the working parts of government machinery in order for such a government to perform meaningfully, creditably and acceptably". This means that governance involves both the governing class and the governed people. In essence, good governance must of necessity be democratic, entail popular participation by the people, be accountable and ensure basic freedoms.

UNESCAP (www.unescap.org/pdd/prs/Project_Activities/Ongoing/gg/governance.asp) defines governance as the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). Since governance is the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented, an analysis of governance focuses on the formal and informal actors involved in decision-making and implementing the decisions made and the formal and informal structures that have been set in place to arrive at and implement the decision.

To the World Bank(1991,1992,1994,2000) governance encompasses the form of political regime; the

process by which authority is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development; and the capacity of governments to design, formulate and implement policies and discharge functions (Santiso,2001:5; Ogundiya, op cit:203) . In addressing governance, the Bank calls into question the ability, capacity and willingness of political authorities to govern effectively in the common interest. There is heightened awareness that the quality of a country's governance system is a key determinant of the ability to pursue sustainable economic and social developments (ibid.). The definitions include three common elements that point toward a minimal understanding of governance as (1) the process (or manner) through which (2) power (or authority) is exercised (3) to manage the collective affairs of a community (or a country, society, or nation).

The six measured indicators of governance according to Sharma(2007:30) are: (a) voice and accountability; (b) political stability and lack of violence; (c) government effectiveness; (d) regulatory quality; (e) rule of law; and (f) control of corruption.

Manifestations of Poverty in Nigeria

There are different manifestations of poverty among the people in Nigeria, some of these signs of poverty which are prevalent in Nigeria are as follows.

Income Inequality

Income inequality in the country has risen from 0.429 in 2004 to 0.447 in 2010, just as the gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen (Egharevba and Chiazor, 2012:9). There was an increase in income disparity after the economic growth which Nigeria experienced between 1965-1975, and this income inequality has increased the dimension of poverty in the country (Ucha,2010:53). The income inequality between the people in rural and urban areas in Nigeria is remarkably high, as those who live in the rural areas based all their income on agriculture which is today, not a thriving sector in Nigeria as oil has taken over the economy. The rural population does not invest their money to acquire skills as people in the urban areas would and this makes them more vulnerable to poverty and leads to some social and economic problems such as violence, corruption and so on (Ucha,2010:53).

Health Indicators

Nigeria's health performance indicators showed very poor outcome across the board. Life expectancy is the most common indicator of health conditions in a country, an average life expectancy of less than 55 years, high incidence of poverty and high morbidity rate imply that many parents either die before their children complete schooling, are too poor or too sick to give their children sound childhood nurturing and care. Several poorly nourished and ill-nurtured children start too early to take charge of their own lives, take care of younger siblings and surviving parents who are incapacitated by illness or poverty. Adult morbidity of 0.020% (for those aged 40 and above) means that there is likelihood that 2% of those aged above 40 years will become incapacitated by accident or diseases, to the extent that they are unable to move about or contribute actively in the economy(Mathias, Dickson and Bisong, 2013:263).

Contributing to Nigeria's low life expectancy are high rates of HIV/AIDS infection. The people who are more prone to this killer virus are the women, the youth and the orphans and the vulnerable children. These are the people whose economic status is next to nothing, unlike the men who are more often than not, employers of labour and family heads and bread winners. Those girls who are on the streets hawking, get seduced and lured into commercial sex work, largely because they are poor, some are sent to Italy and other European countries for prostitution only for money (Chukwuma, 2012). According to the report of a new national survey conducted by the federal government for the 2012 National HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health Survey-Plus, Nigeria HIV/AIDS prevalence rate was 3.4 per cent. (<http://www.informationng.com/2013/12/nigerias-hivaids-prevalence-drops-to-3-4.html>).

Another troubling indicator is the maternal mortality rate: an estimated 800 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2000. This rate is worse than that of Ghana (540 deaths) or Cameroon (730 deaths) (Annual Economic Performance: 2012). According to the United Nations' 2010 MDG Report, the infant mortality rate was 75 deaths per 1000 live births, the under-five mortality rate was 157 per 1 000, the maternal mortality rate was 545 deaths per 100 000 live births and the proportion of births attended by skilled personnel was 39%. (<http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/fileadmin/uploads/aeo/PDF/Nigeria%20Full%20PDF%20Country%20Note.pdf>). The World Health Organisation (WHO) ranks Nigeria's health system as the 187th among 191 member states (<http://thepatientfactor.com/canadian-health-care-information/world-health-organizations-ranking-of-the-worlds-health-systems/>). Cheap, good and accessible Medical care is, therefore, out of reach of common Nigerians. On this ground, most Nigerians are discriminated against in the provision of health service.

The inability of Nigeria and some other African countries to eliminate diseases, both the curable and preventable ones that are prevalent in the continent today, is just a pure manifestation of poverty. A good example is malaria, which "claims something like a million African lives a year. Malaria was once an important

disease in the warmer parts of Europe and the USA, but improvements in the living conditions led to its disappearance (Chukwuma, 2012).

Unemployment

In 2008, about 9.1 million of the 61.1 million Nigeria's available labour force was unemployed. By 2010, the total number of unemployed Nigerians had increased to 16 million. Available data shows that unemployment rate has been on the increase, rising from 14.9% to 21% between 2008 and 2010. The unemployment rate was 23 % as at November, 2011. (The Nation online 15th November, 2011; Annual Performance Report, 2011:42).

Nigeria was ranked 153 out of 186 countries in the 2013 United Nations Human Development Index, as unemployment rates have been steadily increasing and younger Nigerians are encountering increasing difficulty in finding gainful employment. According to World Bank cited in (Bangudu, 2013) "Job creation in Nigeria has been inadequate to keep pace with the expanding working age population.

Housing

The number of families living in poverty in Nigeria is increasing alarmingly. For people with low or no income, poverty often takes the form of homelessness: those in less extreme poverty most of the time live in substandard and dangerous housing (Ibiezugbe and Obobor, 2005). For instance, in Amukoko, Badia, Okokomaiko, Mushin and other thickly populated areas of Lagos state, about eight people live in one room apartment. They have everything in common. Father, mother, brothers, sisters all live in one room. At night, they sleep on each other with their parents separated from the rest with curtain. Some five-year olds trudge along the streets in the name of street trading to support the family (Gabriel, 2012). More pathetic are those who build their shanties on top of water. In all the six geo-political zones of the country, the story is the same, poverty on rampage (Gabriel, 2012).

Criminality

Unemployment-induced poverty tends to increase the crime rate and violence in the country. Most unemployed youths resort to crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, internet fraud and other forms of fraudulent activities. The reservation wage they get from these activities is typically barely enough to take care of their basic necessities (Ucha, 2010: 51).

The majority of youths in Nigeria because of joblessness, with no means of livelihood, they are impoverished, and mercenary politics becomes the way out. The politicians capitalize on their joblessness and recruit the youths who not only constitute the pillars of society but also the most vulnerable to the self-inflicted poverty, as their thugs and touts to perpetrate violence (Lawal, 2010).

The effects of poverty

The effects of poverty are serious. Children who grow up in poverty suffer more persistent, frequent, and severe health problems than do children who grow up under better financial circumstances (www.cliffsnotes.com/sciences/sociology/social-and-global-stratification/causes-and-effects-of-poverty).

Levels of stress in the family have also been shown to correlate with economic circumstances. Studies during economic recessions indicate that job loss and subsequent poverty are associated with violence in families, including child and elder abuse (ibid.). Parents who experience hard economic times may become excessively punitive and erratic, issuing demands backed by insults, threats, and corporal punishment.

Providing additional educational opportunities for adolescents may prevent some youths from becoming involved with gangs, drugs and violence, given the evidence linking the perpetrators of crime with school dropouts (Ajakaiye and Adeyeye, 2002).

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Good health is basic to human welfare and a fundamental objective of social and economic development. Poor health shackles human capital, reduces returns to learning, impedes entrepreneurial activities and holds back growth and economic development. Diseases cause poverty and vice versa. In most countries of the world major, diseases causing poverty are Malaria, HIV/AIDS and other infections/diseases. In Nigeria for instance, AIDS prevalence is about 5.4% with an infected adult population of 2.6 million. This will constrain availability and participation of this segment of the population in the labour market to earn income (Ajakaiye and Adeyeye, 2002).

Crime and Violence whose roots can be traced to poverty have serious economic costs. For instance, an increasing proportion of public resources, which are already limited, are required to strengthen police enforcement, support the growing prison population, finance the demands place on the judicial system, and provide health care for persons injured by violence. Other costs include the expensive security systems and guards now required by businesses and homes, the loss in potential revenues from foreign investor and tourists

who have sought other destination as a result of the threat of crime, and the migration of the urban middle class (Ajakaiye and Adeyeye, 2002).

Strategies towards poverty reduction

There have been various programmes by successive government aimed at reducing poverty.

The first of such programmes called, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) was enunciated in 1979 by Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo. The programmes had the specific focus of increasing food production on the premise that availability of cheap food will mean higher nutrition level and invariably lead to national growth and development. OFN lasted until Shehu Shagari's government took over in 1979. Shagari (1979-1983) shared almost the same poverty reduction idea with his predecessor. He came up with his own pet project named the Green Revolution, which also emphasised food production (<http://www.dawodu.com/poverty1.pdf>).

Gen. Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993) introduced a welter of poverty alleviation programmes. These include the Peoples bank, which sought to provide loans to prospective entrepreneurs on soft terms and without stringent requirements of collaterals. It also regulated to an extent the activities of community banks that also sprouted as adjuncts of the Peoples Bank and as sources of cheap funds for communities and their members (<http://www.dawodu.com/poverty1.pdf>).

The Directorate of Food Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI) saw also introduced which sought to open up rural areas via construction of feeder roads and provision of basic amenities that would turn them into production centres for the national economy. The Directorate for Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI) was expected to provide basic amenities like access roads, rural electrification and portable water to ease the living conditions of the rural people (Forae, 2011:301).

Another programme that tried to head-off the scourge of poverty by targeting the agricultural sector was the Nigerian Agricultural Land development Authority (NALDA). The Authority was intended to reduce the prevalence of subsistence agriculture in the country and in its place infuse large scale commercial farming by assisting farmers with inputs and developing land for them to the point of planting, at subsidised rates (<http://www.dawodu.com/poverty1.pdf>).

The National Directorate of employment (NDE) was launched in 1987 for the purpose of creating employment opportunities in form of self-employment and self-reliance aimed at poverty reduction among unemployed youths in rural and urban areas. This was to be achieved through the training of the youths in different arts and crafts and providing them with soft loans and equipment. It had four main programmes; Vocational Skills Development, Special Public Works, Small Scale Enterprise and Agriculture. (<http://unilorin.edu.ng/publications/lewu/Lewu%20A%20CRITICAL%20APPRAISAL.pdf>).

The regime of Late Gen. Sani Abacha (1993 – 1998) was known as the midwife of the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) in Nigeria's quest for a way out of debilitating poverty, as this was the period that marked Nigeria's relapse into the global bracket of 25 poorest nations. Under FEAP, micro credit or soft loan was provided to the rural populace for the establishment of cottage industries and improved storage facilities. The micro credit scheme was to serve as investment promotion and poverty alleviation that will stimulate growth and development of the less privileged in Nigeria (Forae, 2011:301).

The Better life for Rural Women heralded by Mrs. Mariam Babangida and Mrs. Mariam Sani Abacha's Family Support Programme (FSP). These programmes tried to introduce gender elements into anti-poverty strategies. The better Life for rural women tried to impact positively on their economic activities and income. (<http://www.cenbank.org/OUT/PUBLICATIONS/EFR/RD/2002/EFRVOL39-4-4.PDF>).

President Obasanjo introduced the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). The programme was to eradicate (and not only alleviate) poverty through four different schemes. (Ogunleye, 2010:298).

(i) Youth Empowerment Schemes (YES)

This Youth Empowerment Schemes (YES) was designed to empower the youth to acquire skills that will make them self-reliant and improve or build their capacity through on-the-job training,

(ii) Rural Infrastructures Development Scheme (RIDS)

Under this second scheme, the government would provide the people with good and portable drinking water by sinking boreholes in each local government area of Nigeria. Also, the abandoned water projects by the Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) were to be completed.

(iii) Social Welfare Services Schemes (SOWESS)

This is meant to provide social amenities such as transportation through the Federal Mass Transit Scheme.

(iv) National Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS)

The Natural Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS) was to harness the agricultural, water and solid mineral resources; conserve the land and space (beaches, reclaimed land, etc.) particularly, for convenient and effective use by small scale operators and the immediate community.

Government believes that Africa's attainment of the Millennium Development Goals depends to a large extent on Nigeria's commitments to poverty reduction. Of utmost significance is the formulation of a

homegrown National Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) which has been described as Nigeria's version of the MDGs. NEEDS was replicated into the State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS) and Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS) at the state and local government levels respectively (Ogunleye, 2010:298).

Despite various efforts by government to alleviate poverty, the scourge is still apparent in the country. Reasons for persistence increase in poverty in Nigeria can be attributed to some of the follow factors:

Unemployment is a major factor for persistence poverty in the country. Many graduates in Nigeria wander the streets without anything reasonable to do for a living. The government is capable but unwilling to provide jobs for them. This leaves many highly qualified people in poverty as seemingly no one cares to know what they are capable of achieving. These people are missing out on the income they would have gotten if they were employed. The number of quality jobs in the economy is low and many government resources are misallocated (Ucha, 2010: 51).

Trade liberalization has increased poverty and inequality for most people Nigeria. Nations are supposed to trade freely amongst themselves for the mutual benefits of their people. As for Nigeria, there are only two major goods that could be marketed – crude oil and agricultural produce. The latter is totally neglected with the discovery of the former in a commercial quantity. The gains of globalization as currently being enjoyed by developed nations seem to be eluding Nigeria because of her inability to export manufactured goods abroad like other developed nations (Gberevbie, Duruji and Ogundeji, 2010).

Gender issue is another factor in poverty alleviation. According to Ajewole cited in Premium Times (September 5th, 2012), "There will be no nation without women; hence when women are impoverished, the nation will also be impoverished." According to the Minister on women affairs, Zainab Maina cited in (Daily Post, July 13th, 2013) 70% of Nigerian women are living below poverty line. Overall, women have access to fewer economic resources and have far less social and political power than do men, which greatly restricts their opportunities to climb out of poverty (Ogunleye, 2010:299).

Poor infrastructure base in Nigeria is an important challenge to poverty alleviation in Nigeria. Good road, portable water, electricity etc. no doubt determine the productivity capacity of artisans and the organized private sector. The level of infrastructural development in Nigeria is below average, hence, low level of productivity and poverty escalation (Ogunleye, 2010:300).

The persistence and pervasiveness of poverty in several countries has been linked to the lack of popular participation in governance and decision- making as well as weak institutional base. This has led among other things to poor accountability, transparency in resource allocation, weak programme implementation and monitoring. Ultimately, development programmes are rendered ineffective, poverty reduction initiatives are therefore ineffective and resources wasted (Ajakaiye and Adeyeye, 2002.).

Corruption undermines democracy and good governance by flouting formal processes. Corruption often occurs when leaders are not accountable to those they serve. Corruption usually inhibits development when leaders help themselves to money that would otherwise be used for development projects. It generates economic distortions in the public sector by diverting public investment into capital projects where bribes and kickbacks are more plentiful. According to the Daily Trust 19th March, 2012 (cited in Omotoso, 2013:127), over N14 billion was discovered in the personal accounts of those in charge of the Pension Scheme in the country. The pensioners the money is meant for are dying of hunger and penury. So also many billions of naira was mismanaged by the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) management, yet, the Niger Delta region for which the money is meant remains problematic as the people are poor and lack basic amenities (Omotoso, 2010:127).

Recommendations

Lack of good governance appears to be the missing link in the road to development and poverty eradication. A national anti-poverty plan would involve not only policy papers setting out what government intends to do about poverty, but more how the system of government is to be structured so as to enhance participation, accountability, citizenship rights (both political and economic) and political inclusion.

Governments should be actively committed to poverty reduction by improving the basic needs of the poor, water, health, food, shelter, education and social security.

Poverty reduction programmes must target the poor, they must not do so benevolently. The poor should be involved in shaping their own destiny through well-informed participatory politics. Sustainable economic growth requires poor people to have influence on the decisions that affect their lives; specifically strengthening women's voices in the political process builds social independence and greater consideration of gender issues in policy.

Accountability should be ensured to create a context for the empowerment of the poor. Empowerment will allow the poor an opportunity to reorganize their lives, tap the avenues and possibilities available within the state structure and participate in the development process. Available resources should be used skillfully, while

encouraging public participation and democratic systems.

Government needs to provide more job opportunity for the employment of young graduates, which will also help in reducing crime rates, as many youths resort to crime for survival.

Nigeria must begin to make its institutions work to drive sustainable development. We especially need people of high principles and integrity to run the bureaucracy.

Conclusion

This study has shown the various manifestations of poverty in Nigeria and the reasons for persistence poverty despite the introduction of poverty reduction programmes by successive governments. It analyzed how good governance has become a central issue when addressing poverty reduction, through the most popular connections that link both governance and poverty.

The paper emphasized the place of institutional effectiveness, political participation, transparency and accountability which are germane to good governance. Zero tolerance for corruption and stopping illegitimate repatriation of capital will be necessary for effectiveness. Leaders should be selfless and sincere in their approach to poverty eradication. There should be close monitoring of every poverty reduction programme put in place by government to ensure its transparent implementation. The factors that contributed to poverty such as lack of education, unemployment, health problems and bad policies must all be tackled if any progress would be made.

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