

The Political Economy of Poverty Eradication in Nigeria: The Perilous and Tortuous Journey for Mdgs

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Abstract

Poverty remains an onerous task and a tremendous challenge that has proved somewhat insurmountable globally. Poverty is also an excruciating and agonizing reality in sub-Saharan Africa and in Nigeria, poverty has become a vicious cycle and in the face of the multiplicity of policies, strategies and programmes, there is yet no answer to the pervasive plague, nor is there any marked progress towards reducing poverty, let alone eradicating it. This study examines the problems of the political economy nature and character of the manipulation of the perceived or assumed real efforts at eradicating poverty in pursuance of the landmark Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria. The study derived its data from valuable secondary sources and adopted apolitical economy conceptual framework. The study equally posits that the failure, dysfunctionality and inefficacy of poverty reduction and eradication efforts in Nigeria are largely a deliberate design by the leadership and governing class. Furthermore, the paper opined that the journey towards the actualization of the Millennium Development Goal of poverty eradication in Nigeria is perilous, tortuous and foggy. The study concluded with some useful recommendations including structural and institutional reforms that will create a genial climate in order to engineer a strategically systematic, pragmatic, coherent and integrated approach to poverty reduction and elimination policies and action programmes with effective and coordinated public/private sector partnership in Nigeria.

Keywords: political economy, poverty eradication, Nigeria, MDGs.

1. Introduction

Poverty is an all-consuming, complex, devastating and multi-dimensional concept with multiplicity of causes and multiple panacea and therapy. It has also become an internationally recognized problem that deserves more than mere rhetoric, passive and dormant plethora of plans so as to create an action process embodying analysis, goal definition, action programmes and monitoring of results (Ejumudo 2008). Although poverty is a global menace, it is abysmal and commonplace in sub-Saharan Africa where over 1.3 billion still struggle to survive on less than a dollar per day. In these countries, abject poverty has increased, widened, ramified and engulfed an overwhelming majority of the population (Jega 2007). In fact, the grief, despair and pain laden and afflicting nature of poverty in sub-Saharan Africa can be depicted by the human condition which shows that a child born today is more likely to be malnourished than to attend primary school and the likelihood of dying before the age of five is the same as entering secondary school (World Bank 2009). The hydra-headed problem appears to be so entrenched and embedded that it has proved insurmountable in the face of the massive and huge investment of resources and seeming targeted programmes. At the same time, it is constraining development and engendering insecurity and instability in a worrisome and frightening manner. The United Nations (2010; 2011) reports also indicate that the most populous country in sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria accounts for 21-30 percent of the ultra, medial and subjacent poor people living in the subcontinent. According to the report, subjacent poverty defined as the proportion of the population living between \$0.81 and below per day rose noticeably in Nigeria between 1990 and 2004.

In the face of the disturbing proliferation of anti-poverty programmes, there has not been much coordination and integration among them with Nigeria's development policy (Oronsaye and Goke 2006). Several years of the adjustment programme, the country have not been able to produce the sought-after sustainable minimal inflationary growth that was originally anticipated, while poverty has compounded (Olade and Adebayo 1996). In fact, the problem of sustain ability, subsequent upon instability in governance and political climate have continued to undermine their potential contributions to poverty reduction (Ogwumike 2009). Although the sources of poverty in Nigeria are many, at the heart of the problematic of the failure, dysfunctionality and inefficacy of poverty reduction and eradication policies, programmes and activities are the manipulation of the political structure and process for the corrupt enrichment and fraudulent empowerment of the Nigerian elite. This explains not only the inevitability of the explanation of failure of anti-poverty me and efforts in Nigeria from the political economy dimension, but also why Nigeria may be described as being in the thick of the world's poorest people that could be running against the tide of global efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty and hunger by 2015.

2. Poverty: A Conceptual Understanding

A universally acceptable definition of poverty is somewhat elusive. This is largely because it affects many aspects of human condition, including physical, moral and psychological and the fact that the term is confounded by a wooliness of thought and usage that is characteristic of the social sciences. In fact, in recent time, the understanding of poverty has become deeper and broader. It is a multi-dimensional social phenomenon that is depicted by an extreme lack of the basic necessities for human well being and decency. It manifests itself in the deprivation of the lives of the people, which include the denial of opportunities and choices most basic to human development (Dinye 2012:13). The concept has acquired some non-economic connotations (Ojiako 2012) like low level of education, poor health, inability or willingness to work, anti-social behaviour and improvidence. In this context, poverty is not just a condition; it is a process. According to the 1998 Human Development Report, assets in the human poverty context also cover many other kinds of resources: personal, social, political and environmental. It is equally the inability to provide or secure basic needs that may be due to lack of development of latent ability or mismanagement (Obasanjo and Mabogunje 1992). It is also the lack of command over basic consumption needs like food and clothing (Bidani 1994). The World Bank (2011) equally emphasized that poverty is the inability to attain a minimum standard of living. In the thinking of Todaro and Smith (2011), poverty is the condition of the number of people who are unable to command sufficient resources to satisfy their basic needs, while Osuji (2011) viewed poverty as a deprivation that manifest in the form of acute shortage of the basic things needed for comfortable living.

In the thinking of Hazell and Haddad (2011), poverty consists of two interacting deprivations-physiological and social. Physiological deprivation describes the inability of individuals to meet or achieve basic material and physiological needs that can be measured either as a lack of income, which limits access to food and to education, health, housing, water and sanitation services, or by the failure to achieve desired outcomes, such as a high quality diet rich in micronutrients, health status, educational attainment and the quality of health, water, and sanitation services received, while social deprivation refers to an absence of elements that are empowering, such as autonomy, time, information, dignity and self-esteem. Lack of empowerment is also reflected in exclusion from important decision-making processes, even when the outcomes are of considerable importance to the poor for example, decisions about public investment in the local community, management of common properties and priorities for agricultural research and extension.

In a similar vein, Onibokun and Kumuyi (2011) opined that poverty is a way of life characterized by low caloric intake, inaccessibility to adequate health, housing and other societal facilities and low quality education, while Ajakaiye and Oluinola (1999) posited that poverty is an entity faced with economic, social, political, cultural and environmental deprivation to which a person, a household, a community or a nation can be subjected. Poverty, which is a symptom or manifestation of underdevelopment of the individual, is a state of insufficient or total lack of necessities and facilities like food, housing, medical care, education, social and environmental services, consumer goods, recreational opportunities and transport facilities as Aboyade (1999) rightly articulated. World Bank (2011), observed that poverty has various manifestations which can be linked to the lack of income and assets to attain basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, clothing and acceptable levels of health and education; the sense of voicelessness and powerlessness in the institutions of the state and society which subjects the poor to rudeness, humiliation, shame, inhumane treatment and exploitation in the hands of the people in authority; absence of rule of law, lack of protection against violence, extortion and intimidation, lack of civility and predictability in interaction with public officials; lack of economic opportunities, threats of physical force or arbitrary bureaucratic power that makes it difficult for the people to engage in public affairs; and vulnerability to adverse shocks and disruptions linked to an inability to cope with them. Poverty is therefore conceptualized in this paper as an undesirable state and people are deemed to be poor when they lack the basic capacity to meet their existential needs and are found in a condition of lack or impaired access to productive resources, broad deprivation and social and economic helplessness or predicament.

3. Anatomy and Types of Poverty

Poverty can commonly be viewed as not only the lack of income, but also low literacy, nutritional status and life expectancy and the access that people have to choices that they are able to make (World Bank 2012; UN 1999). Poverty can be structural (chronic) or transient (temporary). The former is a persistent or permanent socio-economic deprivation and it stems from a host of factors like limited productive resources, inadequate levels of education, lack of access to productive assets and input, lack of skills for gainful employment, endemic socio-

political and cultural and gender factors and limitations, while the latter is transitory, temporary or transitional and it is policy-induced, yet it could become structural if it is not overcome or left unchecked. Some other authors like Giddens (2012) attempted a distinction between subsistence or absolute poverty and relative poverty. Subsistence poverty refers to lack of basic requirements to sustain a physically healthy existence—sufficient food and shelter to make possible the physically efficient functioning of the body. Poverty may therefore be analyzed in terms of lack of resources to maintain the living conditions and amenities that are customary or at least widely encouraged or approved in society (Townsend 2012).

Aside from the afore-stated categorization, poverty has also been delineated along the lines like impact, spread, time, and duration (Ojiako 2012). There are therefore cyclical poverty, which is widespread but reasonable; collective poverty that affects a broad spectrum of society, i.e., that depicts the picture of that society in a more permanent fashion, and case poverty which is also close to the collective poverty at least in duration, but refers specially to individual situation of extreme want in the midst of plenty, extreme poverty for indigence or destitution, usually specified as the inability to satisfy even minimum food needs. Edozien (2012), categorized poverty into three namely: generalized poverty, island poverty and case poverty. In his exposition, the first type is linked with the process of economic growth in which the average productivity of labour is increased, while the latter two are the main kinds of poverty found in developed countries like the United States and they are occasioned by the inability or unwillingness to move out of low-income areas or regions and some conditions like mental deficiency, bad health, excessive procreation, alcoholism and insufficient education.

Schubert (2011) and Hemmer (2011) also classified poverty into relative and absolute types. Schubert noted that absolute poverty is that which could be applied at all times in all societies, such as the level of income necessary for bare subsistence, while relative poverty relates to the living standards of the poor. Hemmer, on the other hand, opined that the relative type exists when the subject under consideration is poor in relation to others in such a way that the provision of goods available to the subject is lower than that of other persons or households, while absolute poverty refers to the lack of minimum physical requirements of a person or household for existence and it is so extreme that those affected are no longer in a position to lead a life worthy of human honour or dignity. Anyanwu (2011) equally emphasized that poverty can be either conjunctural or structural, with the former being temporary and the latter long term. Although, Anyanwu (2011) citing Murdoch (1994) also categorized poverty into transitory or transitional and structural, he noted that the transitory type is temporary in nature, while the structural emanates from the structural characteristics of poor households like low level of education, income fluctuation due to primary agricultural production with its numerous uncertainties as well as weak and poorly developed financial and social insurance institutions. In fact, his use of the word transitory is the same thing as the conjunctural category of Hiffe and therefore a matter of nomenclature.

Introducing another perspective to the structure of poverty, Oladeji and Adebayo (1996) and Aku et al (1997), classified poverty along five dimensions of deprivation viz; personal and physical, economic, social, cultural and political deprivations. Personal deprivation is experienced in areas like health, nutrition and literacy; economic deprivation manifest in denial of access to the basic necessities of life; social deprivation is linked with obstacles to full participation in different aspects of society; cultural deprivation has to do with values, beliefs, attitudes, knowledge and orientation which limits access to economic and political opportunities and political deprivation that arises as a result of economic constraints, illiteracy, ignorance, and lack of political voice.

4. Causes of Poverty

Poverty that is a major development problem in Africa is caused by a multiplicity of factors (Jhingan 2005). The various factors, that explain largely why the region has not succeeded in solving the basic existential livelihood problem include the following:

- 4.1 **Underdevelopment:** As a result of underdevelopment, a large portion of the population lacks the most essential needs of life. This is largely due to the total national income, a possible explanation for the low aggregate consumption level, which is grossly inadequate to cope with the enormous or gargantuan size of the population.
- 4.2 **Inequality:** Extreme inequality is another source of poverty. It is, in fact, a major factor like underdevelopment and it is characterized by gaps in income and wealth. This brings about low standard of living, which is primarily depicted by low level of existential needs.

- 4.3 Unemployment:** Unemployment, particularly the rising type, causes unemployment. Galloping unemployment may further compound poverty due to underdevelopment and inequality.
- 4.4 Inflation:** Inflationary trend leads to poverty mainly because rising prices alters the purchasing power of the population, especially those that are vulnerable. Thus, inflation engenders impoverishment of the people at the lower rung and those who exist vulnerably in the middle rung of society.
- 4.5 Low Technological Capacity:** Low technological capacity is equally a contributory factor to poverty. This inadequate capacity explains why the production and manufacturing processes and techniques are far below the acceptable standards of developed economics. Secondly, such low levels of capacity will not only constrain the functioning and organization of production, financial and marketing units and skills, it will also make per capital productivity level to be consistently low.
- 4.6 Inadequate Growth Rate:** Inadequate growth rates, particularly in the face of a high growth in population tends to perpetuate poverty. Although growth does not have an automatic impact on poverty, it is a prerequisite for meaningful poverty reduction. All the same, inadequate growth rates can lead to poverty or aggravate it where it already exists. -
- 4.7 Capital Inadequacy:** Capital inadequacy is another cause of poverty. This inadequacy is as a result of the low level of capital availability and low rate of capital formation.
- 4.8 Social Factors:** People are caught up in the vicious circle of poverty as a result of the prevalent socio-cultural institutions. In order to meet their social and cultural obligations, they spend extravagantly even in the face of their low- income levels. They are therefore compelled to resort to borrowing and the high level of indebtedness is both the cause and effect of poverty.
- 4.9 Low Human Capital Development:** Low human capital endowment due to blocked or inadequate access to education, health sanitation, water and other necessities of life can bring about poverty. As a consequence, they are not able to lead a life that they value and they are disabled from realizing their potentials as human beings.
- 4.10 Corruption, Weak Institutions and Poor Governance:** Corruption in all shapes, particularly when it has become structural and institutionalized, weak institutions that are tangled and decayed characterized by diversion of public funds, poor infrastructural development, poor attention to socio-welfare programmes and neglect can either create or accentuate and aggravate poverty
- 4.11 Regional Disparity, Urban Bias and Environmental Degradation:** Due to inadequate attention to rural development in poor regions and urban bias in the planning and execution of development projects and programmes. poverty can either result or be made worse. Such rural poor people have a propensity for crude exploitation of natural resources, which produces environmental degradation and reduced productivity that also combine to aggravate poverty in the run. This source of poverty is more policy-related.
- 4.12 Inadequacy or Non-existence of Social and Welfare Programmes:** Little or no access to social welfare and assistance programmes by the down-trodden who are trapped in transitory poverty such as drought, floods and wars due to lack of proper planning, poor commitment and manipulation of due process by the government and its agencies is arguably another factor that is responsible for poverty,
- 4.13 Negligence and Lack of Political Will:** The inaction, negligence and lack of political will characterized by little or no commitment by government to its policies and programmes also contribute and exacerbate poverty.

5. Theoretical Framework

Political Economy is conceptualized and applied variously in different contexts. All the same, it simply refers to the interplay between politics, economy, law and sociology. Although it was first used in England in the 18th century to describe the study of the conditions under which production was organized in the nation-states of the new capitalist system (Ojameruaye 2006); however, since the middle of the 19th century, its conceptualization

and application has assumed an interdisciplinary dimension with a focus on political science, economics and law and how political institutions and the political environment influence, affect and impact on economic and social behaviour. The main exponents of the political economy approach in the 18th and 19th centuries were Adam Smith, David Richard and Karl Marx.

Although the political economy approach is rooted in the fundamental process of production and distribution and the primacy of material conditions, particularly economic factors in the explanation of social life (Ake 1981) and utilizes the methodology of Marx in explaining the phenomenon and concept of poverty, the origin of this approach dates back to the classical political economy, including the work of Marx with emphasis on the character of capitalism and its application to the periphery. The influence of the theory and the methodology of Marx have been so pervasive that there is considerable confusion as to where Marxism stops and the political economy approach starts (Ihonvbere 1989). This explains why its general thrust is patent enough, but the details are still blurred and there are areas of considerable confusion and contradictions. In the face of the tendency to equate the political economy approach with Marxism, there is the contention that there exists a political economy approach, which is evidently distinguishable from Marxism despite its Marxist methodological thrust and inclination. The variants of the political economy approach therefore reflect the divergent and sometimes contradictory trends and the fluidity of this still evolving methodological approach.

In consonance with the Political Economy paradigm, the production relations and forces will create differences that will eventually engender an initial non- antagonistic dimension which will culminate and manifest in inequality in society. Therefore, the approach that provides a methodological basis for the study and understanding of the system of social production and various development stages and attempts to explain the structural relationship in society is relevant for the assessment of the failure, dysfunctionality and inefficacy of poverty reduction and eradication policies, programmes and activities in Nigeria.

6. A Critical Analysis of the Various Poverty Reduction and Eradication Programmes and Strategies in Nigeria

Successive Nigerian governments have over the years formulated policies and adopted strategies and programme supposedly to combat and reduce or eradicate poverty. Such anti- poverty efforts, whether well thought out or haphazardly planned, whether real and genuine or false imagined and deceptive, predates the signing of the millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in September 2000. Ironically, most of the same governments contributed through faulty and inappropriate political, economic and social policies mismanagement, corruption and inaction to the poverty status of the country, which is not only frightening and worrisome, but also structural and endemic. For instance, the Obasanjo military administration (1976-1979) and the Shagari government (1979-1983) launched the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) and the Green Revolution Programmes assumedly to improve nutrition, enhance healthy living and reduce poverty through agricultural revolution and productivity. Although the Buhari administration (1983-1985) did not articulate any clear cut and specific poverty alleviation programme, the Babangida government (1985-1993) made some unannounced efforts expectedly meant to alleviate poverty in Nigeria. The critical issue is whether such bold and ambitious efforts and a welter of poverty alleviation programmes which included the Peoples and Community Banks that sought to provide loans to prospective entrepreneurs in both rural and urban areas (Oladeji and Abiola 1998) and without collateral requirements, the Directorate of Food, Roads Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) that was supposed to open up rural areas through the provision of basic social amenities that would turn them into production centres for enhanced national development and the Nigerian Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) which was meant to reduce the prevalence of subsistence agriculture and provide a catalyst for the infusion of large scale commercial farming and the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) that was to design and execute programmes geared toward combating mass unemployment precipitated largely by the Shagari dispensation and the global economic crunch which then had its toll on the country.

The Abacha regime (1993-1998) also midwived the Family Economic Advancement Programme (PEAP) probably as a bail out strategy from the debilitating and excruciating poverty that almost engulfed Nigeria that was then acknowledged as one of the world 25poorest nations. Apart from the Better Life for women and the Family Support Programme introduced and piloted by Mrs. Maryan Babangida and Mrs. Marian Abacha that were meant to cater for the needs of the rural women, health care delivery, child welfare youth development and improved nutritional status to families in rural areas, the Obasanjo civilian administration introduced the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) in 2001 and 2005 respectively. While NAPEP which was designed to cover youth

empowerment, rural infrastructure development, social welfare service and natural resource development and conservation schemes produced insignificant impact on Nigerians and was not distinguishable from the motley crowd of other previous failed poverty alleviation programmes introduced in the country (Akinbode 2003), the rather ambitious and supposedly promising NEEDS which was expectedly meant to lay a solid foundation for sustainable poverty reduction, employment generation, wealth creation and value orientation appears to be a bogus poverty reduction strategy despite Soludo's (2005) claim and assertion that NEEDS is a realistic appraisal of what is feasible within the medium/long term frame work and it is more focused, realistic and reform based.

A critical appraisal of the poverty reduction and eradication strategies and programmes adopted and executed so far in Nigeria by various governments indicate that they have been fraught with deliberate poor and cosmetic plans, lack of political will and genuine commitment, lack-lustre attitude and fraudulent manipulation of the poverty reduction process and efforts. As a consequence, Nigeria, which was one of the richest 50 countries in the wake of the 1970s, has slide to become one of the 25 poorest countries in the present century. In fact, it is ironical to note that Nigeria that is the sixth largest exporter of oil is equally the host of the third largest number of poor people after China and India. Even though the 2004 statistical report of the National Planning Commission (Federal Office of Statistics 2012) show that poverty using the rate of US \$ 1 day, increased from 28.1 percent in 1980 to 46.3 percent in 1985 and declined to 42.7 percent in 1992 only to increase again to 65.6 percent and decreased to 54.4 percent, Nigeria still fare poorly in all development indicators.

Besides, the seeming increase in economic growth in the last few years has not significantly narrowed the gap between the rich and poor in Nigeria. Although economic growth is a necessity, but not a sufficient condition for poverty reduction, it is obvious that the gains from the so-called peripheral growth have not significantly or sufficiently tricked down to reduce poverty in Nigeria; rather, it has resulted in increased inequality. Moreover, the experiences of the scattered poverty reduction and eradication strategies and programmes in Nigeria as far as the well being of the poor is concerned have been evidently disappointing. Equally worrisome is the fact that the country has the resources necessary for the attainment of human development targets, yet it is not meeting them, an indication that it is plagued not only with human development effort deficit, but that there is a deliberate design to ensure the abysmal failure of such misplaced efforts. The efforts are misplaced partly because the policies and programmes are not genuinely pro-poor, especially as such pro-poor policies and programmes will succeed if the power relations is sufficiently diffused (Kimenyi 2005) so that all members of the Nigerian society have significant leverage over the type of policies that are enacted and programmes that are executed.

The trend of poverty in Nigeria indicates that poverty is not really reducing, let alone on the part of eradication. Rural poverty increased from 22 percent to 68 percent, while urban poverty increased from 17.2 percent to 55.2 percent. The poverty situation in Nigeria is precarious not only in income but also in terms of food (Ijaiya 2011). On income poverty, the nation witnessed a worsening income inequality, while on food poverty, the proportion of the underweight children stood at 30.7 percent in 1999. The figure for rural food poverty stood at 34.1 percent, while that of urban food poverty was 21.7 percent. Similarly, Nigeria's rank in the Human Development Index remained low, being the 152nd out of 175 countries. This low HDI score reflects the situation with regard to poor access to basic social services in the country (UNDP 2011). The use of socio-economic indicators like per capita income, life expectancy at birth (year), access to health-care services, safe water, education, sanitation facilities and electricity, also depicts the extent of poverty in Nigeria. As indicated in the table below, the rate of poverty in Nigeria has not shown any remarkable reduction when considered from the above indicators:

Table I
 Estimated Total Population and the Rate of Absolute Poverty in Nigeria between 1990 and 2010

Year	Estimated Population (in million)	Total Absolute No. of Poor People (in million)	Percentage (%) that are poor
1990	86.6	38.0	44.0
1991	88.5	38.5	43.5
1992	91.3	39.0	42.7
1993	93.5	45.8	49.0
1994	96.2	52.6	54.7
1995	98.9	59.3	60.0
1996	102.3	67.1	65.6
1997	104.0	67.4	65.0
1998	106.3	68.0	65.2
1999	109.3	72.3	66.1
2000	111.3	77.0	69.2
2001	114.0	81.0	71.2
2002	116.4	86.0	74.0
2003	119.0	91.0	77.0
2004	121.6	95.7	79.0
2005	124.3	97.0	81.0
2006	125.2	92.1	80.3
2007	126.3	91.7	78.5
2008	126.9	89.6	76.8
2009	127.5	88.4	73.8
2010	128.2	87.5	72.2

Source: Adapted from Gafar Ijaiya, *Estimating the Rate of Absolute Poverty for National Development in H.A. Saliu et al (eds.) Perspectives on Nation-Building and Development in Nigeria. (2011), Lagos: Concept Publications. Pp. 167 and 173.*

The failure and dysfunctionality of the poverty reduction and eradication policies and programmes in Nigeria, both before and after the Millennium Development Declaration, can therefore be appropriately traced to deliberate poor planning, policy disconnect and discontinuity, pro-rich approach, political design stimulation interference and manipulation, selfish, fraudulent and corruptive motive, poor coordination, action dilemma and general lacklustre and lackadaisical attitude by government and its poverty-related institutions and agencies. The above development and experience questions the integrity, purpose and workability of the so-called poverty reduction and eradication efforts in Nigeria.

7. The Political Economy Explanation of the Failure, Dysfunctionality and Inefficacy of Poverty Reduction and Eradication Efforts and the Perilous and Tortuous Journey for the MDGs in Nigeria

In the face of the plethora of poverty reduction and eradication policies, programmes and efforts in Nigeria, the country is still enmeshed, entangled and embroiled in poverty. This does not only bring into fore the paradox of a rich country and a poor people, but it exposes the inevitability of a political economy explanation for the failure, dysfunctionality and inefficacy of poverty reduction and eradication efforts. From the stage of conception through policy formulation to programme design and execution, the underlying problematic in the failure and inefficacy of poverty reduction and eradication efforts in Nigeria is the manipulation of the political structure and process for the economic benefit and personal aggrandizement of the rich and the disadvantage and pauperization of the poor and down-trodden who are the presumed targets.

First and foremost, the so-called poverty reduction and eradication programmes are not pro-poor right from the conception and design stages. The real targets therefore, by design, are not the poor Nigerians, but the rich and their army of beneficiaries. Moreover, the programmes are mostly politically motivated and not appropriately

constructed to satisfy the economic needs of the poor and the social requirements of the Nigerian society. The malfunctioning and failure of the so-called pro-poor policies and programmes are largely due to the design and content deficiency as well as the corrupt enrichment and empowerment drive of the Nigerian elite and their cohorts. This shows the manipulative process that expresses the relationship between the means (design and content deficiency) and the end (corrupt enrichment and empowerment drive of the programme initiators and designers).

Secondly, the journey toward the reduction and eradication of poverty before and after the Millennium Development Declaration of 2000 has been a perilous and a tortuous one. The truism of the above assertion rest on the thinking that the journey has not only been a long history of wasted efforts and misadventure, the future is still very bleak. In fact, the attainment of even the modest goal of stopping the traumatic long and winding march along the poverty road has not only eluded many African countries, most of them will not be able to achieve the more ambitious Millennium Development Goal (MDG) time frame of reducing poverty by half by 2015. As for Nigeria, it is already time bad and it will be tantamount to a mirage and an illusion to expect that poverty and hunger (an outgrowth of poverty) can be eradicated. Ordinarily, Nigeria has only been involved in and engrossed with a short-term, piecemeal approach to poverty reduction with poverty eradication outside the purview of the agenda of government. Also, there have been macroeconomic dislocations, policy discontinuity and political manipulation.

8. Concluding Remarks

So far, Nigeria has formulated and adopted a multiplicity of poverty reduction policies and programmes and has embarked on a journey with the appropriate road map, but without genuine commitment so much so that the journey is perilous, foggy and tortuous. For instance, instead of a short-term, piecemeal approach to poverty reduction in Nigeria, the design, packaging, execution, monitoring and evaluation of poverty should transcend the realm of short-term relief and the satisfaction of basic human needs and incorporate the development of strategies for increasing the long-term productive capacity and potential and as a result the incomes of the rural poor. Thus, it is absolutely necessary to synthesize and integrate macroeconomic policies, sector planning, sound programme and project interventions with an eye to achieve the long-term goal.

9. Recommendations

To significantly reduce poverty as a preparatory stage to eventual poverty eradication in Nigeria, although after the Millennium Development Declaration target date of 2015, there should be structural and institutional reforms that will permeate all the sectors of the Nigerian society for effective conception, planning coordination and appropriate delivery of pro-poor programmes and measures to the actual targeted groups, particularly the rather forsaken and abandoned rural poor. This will create a climate that is genial for the reactivation, functionality operationality and workability of the political structures and processes, which will engineer a new regime of a systematic, coherent and strategic approach to poverty reduction and subsequent eradication in Nigeria. At the heart of the expected climate is the political will and genuine commitment of the Nigerian government and its leadership.

A corollary of the above is the desirability and inevitability of effective and coordinated partnership that will engender public/private sector participation, which will rid the country of and emancipate its rural and urban poor from poverty of all shades and manifestation. To this end, the government must as a matter of urgency, abandon its haphazard and reactive strategies, so as to be able to provide the necessary drive and focus that will both stimulate and direct the partnership. All the same, government must still have the conscious realization of and pragmatic attitude towards its primary responsibility for the human and infrastructural development in Nigeria that will energize, propel and facilitate the galvanization of other processes and activities that are germane for the envisaged effective conception, planning, coordination, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the pro-poor, bottom-up poverty reduction and eradication strategies and programmes. The bottom-up approach will, of course, enable the integration of the views and perceptions of the actual poor into the developmental efforts of the country that will squarely address the genuine needs of the poor and make development planning and management sensitive and pro-poor.

Also, the government must adopt a pragmatic approach that will facilitate poverty reduction in rural and urban areas and this will require facilities that can enhance the people livelihood, productivity and incomes. Such

inputs and facilities will include equipment, machines and input in different productive and entrepreneurial sectors, credit facilities, human and skill development programmes and other significant social welfare schemes.

Finally, the need for encouraging, strengthening, harnessing and exploiting the community-based development organizations and associations through relevant sensitization and practical result-oriented seminars and workshops that will engender their effective participation in poverty reduction and eradication programmes and activities can not be over-emphasized. This grassroots approach and arrangement will require the active involvement of sub national governments in the conception, formulation and execution of relevant, workable and attainable local poverty reduction and eradication policies and programmes. This also underscores the imperative of a balanced, well-coordinated and decentralized approach that will adequately and effectively address the poverty reduction and eradication concern at the various levels of governance.

In sum, Nigeria has begun its journey supposedly for the actualization of the Millennium Development Goal of reducing and eradicating poverty. Arguably, the leadership class in Nigeria knows where the country is in terms of the poverty situation and what they ought to do to take it where it ought to be, but it is in a straight betwixt reality and gimmick. The journey is apparently a long, perilous, tortuous and foggy one because between policies, plans and programmes, there is a yawning gap created by poor planning and inertia, pro-rich mentality and approach, lack of political will and genuine commitment, deliberate design and action dilemma. All the same, the above goal is achievable if all the necessary and sufficient conditions precedent to its realization are generated and sustained, although not within the limits of the target date of 2015.

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