THE NIGERIAN AGRICULTURE AND POVERTY INCIDENCE: THE NEED FOR PRIVATE SECTOR EMPOWERMENT

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ABSTRACT

Poverty in Nigeria is concentrated in rural areas. Low resource or resource-poor farmers characterized by preponderance of small farm units, fragile soils, rain-dependent, minimum inputs and poor yield dominate the agricultural sector. The incidence of poverty is highest among households in which the head is engaged in agriculture as the main source of income. Agricultural growth is therefore important to the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger in Nigeria. Conscious policy efforts by government towards poverty alleviation began during the SAP era. Some companies like Shell and certain State Governments have shown real interest in alleviating poverty through their agricultural programmes and policy statements. Nigeria's current vision for agricultural development is expressed in the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), the New Agricultural Policy (NAP), and the Rural Sector Development Strategy (RSDS). This paper posits that provision of electricity, potable water, health centres and formal schools will facilitate the sustainability of any impact of poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria. Encouraging community development projects evolved by the communities themselves will minimize poverty incidence. Increasing the access of the poor to land and other productive resources will reduce poverty and generate employment. Development of infrastructural facilities in the rural areas has the two pronged approach of reducing poverty and developing the rural areas. Encouraging processing through adequate incentives to SMEs will also further empower the private sector.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of agriculture to all countries is often seen from the perspectives of food self-sufficiency, foreign exchange earnings, and employment. These attributes are much more important to the developing countries given the fact that most of the population rely on agriculture. A significant phenomenon is that fragile and difficult environments (Chambers et al 1989) characterize third world agriculture. According to the Brundtland Commission categorization of agricultural systems (WCED 1987), three systems are recognized. These are:

1) The *Industrial Agriculture* characterized by large farm units, high capitalization, and high input-dependent and often times subsidies-supported and high productivity;
2) The *Green Revolution Agriculture*, characterized by a mixture of small and large farms which exploit high-yielding varieties with complementary inputs generating high yield;
3) *Low Resource or Resource-Poor Agriculture*, also characterized by preponderance of small farm units, fragile soils, rain-dependent, minimum inputs and of course poor yield.

It is to the third category that the Sub-Saharan African agriculture belongs. There is a direct link to poverty, given this characteristic of developing country agriculture. In fact, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) estimates that seven out of ten (70%) of the world's poor live in rural areas. They include smallholders, landless labourers, traditional pastoralists, artisanal fishermen and marginalized groups such as refugees, indigenous peoples and female headed households. Food and agriculture are centrally involved in prospects for economic growth, food security, income generation, and the reduction of poverty.

The Nigerian agriculture remains the main stay of the national economy contributing substantially to her Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 31.2% in 2002, an important sector in terms of output and employment as well as contributing significantly to national food self-sufficiency by accounting for over 90% of total food consumption requirements. Agricultural growth was highly variable during the 1980s, fluctuating between -16% and 17% per year. The uneven growth pattern resulted mainly from variability in agricultural export earnings caused by year-to-year production swings and instability in international commodity prices. The variation decreased as commodity exports declined, and agricultural growth stabilized at 3 to 5% per year during the period 1995 to 2004 (WDI Online).

In terms of employment, in 2002, approximately 43% of the national labor force was employed in agriculture, down from 54% in 1980. Smallholder or subsistence agriculture offers limited employment opportunities for degree holders, making it unattractive for graduates of secondary and tertiary institutions. The steady out-migration of younger workers to urban centers has deprived the agricultural sector of labor, creating the paradox of rural labor shortages in a labor-surplus economy. Agricultural wage rates are roughly the same as in the urban informal sector (the main source of employment after agriculture), but employment is more regular in urban areas. Wages in the agricultural sector and in the urban informal sector continue to lag far behind those in formal sectors, such as manufacturing and services (World Bank 2002). Employment opportunities in formal agro-industry are relatively scarce, due to the capital intensity of this sector.

In 1980, poverty was largely a rural phenomenon in Nigeria, but by 1985, poverty has become a common feature in both rural and urban areas (The World Bank, 1996b; Aigbokan, 1998, FOS, 1999; Okojie *et al*., 1999; Okuneye, 2001; Ogwumike, 2001). Urban poverty incidence was recorded as 38% in 1985. The incidence of rural poverty equally increased from 28% to 51% as poverty spreads to urban areas. This high incidence of urban poverty has been attributed to rural-urban migration largely caused by the oil boom of the 1970s and 1980s as well as inadequate agricultural and rural development policies of the 2nd Republic and subsequently military dictatorship. In 1992, urban poverty headcount remained unchanged at 37.5% while rural poverty declined from 51% in 1985 to 46% in 1992. However, as shown in Table 1, poverty in Nigeria was as high as 62.2% in 2000.

Table 1: Trend in Poverty Level in Nigeria (%)

Year	Rural Poverty (%)	Urban Poverty (%)	Estimated Population (Millions)	Proportion of Population in Nigeria (%)
1980	28.1	17.2	65	27.2
1985	46.3	37.8	75	46.3
1992	42.7	37.5	91.5	42.8
1996	65.6	58.2	120	62.2
2000	65.8	58.6	120	62.2

Source: National Consumer Survey (various issues)

The Punch (a Nigerian News paper) of Thursday October 23, 2003 reported Dr. Chimaroke Nnamani the Executive Governor of Enugu State in South Eastern Nigeria, as stating that 87% of Nigerians live below the poverty line and Nigeria was rated 154 on the world marginal poverty index out of 172 countries. The implication of this is that about 93 million out of the estimated 120 million Nigerians are living in poverty.

POVERTY AND CAUSES OF POVERTY

Undoubtedly, poverty is real and it exists in all the economies of the world but at varying degrees. Poverty as a concept is earlier to describe than to define. Hence a universally acceptable definition of poverty has remained elusive. It can be said to be a vicious cycle in which case a person is poor because he is poor. To get out of this becomes difficult except by intervention.

> However, suffice to say that Poverty is a multi-dimensional, social-economic and cultural situation that transcends economic description and analysis. In fact, it is much more easily understood when experienced. This is because, poverty like an elephant can be easily recognized than defined or explained.

Poverty takes different forms of which three broad ones can be identified. These are: physiological deprivation, social deprivation and human deprivation. Physiological deprivation can be further divided into two types: income/consumption (inadequate consumption of basic need primarily food) and basic human needs (insufficient basic needs fulfillment, health, education etc). Such deprivation can include lack of basic capabilities to have a long healthy life with freedom or lack of resources required for participation in customary activities (social exclusion). Human freedom deprivation is denial of right and freedom as well as lack of dignity, self-respect, security and justice.

Poverty exists at the global, national, community, household, and individual levels. At the national level, poverty represents a state of general socio-economic underdevelopment arising from poor natural resource endowment, poor human resource endowment, and low productivity, low and stagnating national income of GDP, inadequate availability of social or infrastructural facilities and services, and a general inability to provide a decent level of living for the ordinary citizens. At the household or individual level, poverty is inability to gain access to basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter etc), inability to fulfil basic economic and social obligations and general lack of self-esteem. Inadequate income to meet basic needs, lack of skill or opportunity for gainful employment, lack of access to productive assets and social constraints to self-improvement are some of the basic underlying factors in poverty.

Poverty can be chronic or transitory, depending on how long poverty is experienced by an individual or a community. Chronic poverty is long term and persistent and the causes are largely structural and endemic, while transitory poverty is temporary, transient and short-term in nature. Okumadewa (2001) also defines poverty as absolute or relative. Absolute poverty is the situation of lack of access to resources needed to obtain the minimum necessities required to maintain physical efficiency. Relative poverty, on the other hand, is the inability to maintain a given minimum contemporary standard of living. One is adjudged poor relative to the other. This can be measured by determining an average income for a nation or region's average, etc and compare to another.

In the European Union, anyone whose income is less than half the average income of the total population of the respective country is considered poor. Many international development organizations use an absolute concept of poverty which has been defined as an income of one dollar per day per person (Hauser and Pilgram, 1999). An overriding implication of poverty is a state of not having or inability to get the necessities of life. In the hierarchy of human needs, physiological needs are uppermost. Among the physiological needs, food holds a prominent position.

One of the key issues thrown into sharp focus by recent research is that over 60% of Nigerians live below poverty line, as internationally defined. Poor people are defined as those 'struggling to survive on less than $370 a year'. As the most populous and one of the largest countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the issue of poverty in Nigeria is of concern not only in itself but also as a challenge to poverty eradication in the African continent. Despite the enormous physical and human resources in Nigeria, there had been progressively worsening welfare and poverty conditions. The Human Development Report (HDR, 1998) revealed that Nigeria ranks 154th on the scale of Human Poverty Index (HPI), thus making it the 20th poorest country in the World. The Nigerian situation is so paradoxical that The World Bank (1996) refers to it as "poverty in the midst of plenty".

According to Maxell (1989), in real life, it can be assumed that all that are poor are also vulnerable because they are susceptible to large fluctuations in real income over relatively short periods, coupled with the absence of offsetting mechanisms to stabilize purchasing power. In Nigeria, poverty is widespread and severe. Using the most recent poverty indicators such as illiteracy, per capita income, access to safe water and the number of poor people, Nigeria ranks below Kenya, Ghana and Zambia as shown in Table 2. Nigeria's GDP/capita is also lower, while purchasing power continues to decline with high inflation and increasing income inequality. It is interesting to note that, UNICEF (1995) classifies Nigeria as a country with severe child malnutrition and high mortality rates for children under 5 years old. Added to this are inadequate health facilities, poor water supply and demeaning housing standards.

Causes of poverty are perhaps as various as the types of poverty identified. The classification can be based on the concepts. A deterministic approach has it that a person is poor because his parents or family members are poor. However, generalised poverty is assumed to result from slow growth of total output or output per capita. This may emanate from lack of adequate savings in the economy for investment, or inability to invest the available savings productively to generate increases in physical assets that will lead to economic growth (Ihimodu, 1996). Lack of technical knowledge inadequate productive resources particularly capital and land. Other causes are geographical and occupational factors. Some occurrences that can cause poverty include drought, flood, war, famine, etc. Others include location, family background, societal, population, norms and cultural values, mismanagement of public resources, deprivation, exploitation, market imperfection, and low technological development and the vision and mission of government. There can also be some external factors such as political and international influences on forms of assistance, ban or restriction on the products of the countries or communities. These rub on poverty incidences and their alleviation.

Table 2: Social indicators in selected African Countries

Indicator	Nigeria	Cote d'voire	Ghana	Kenya	Zambia
GDP/capita ($)	260	660	390	280	400
Population growth rate (%)	2.9	3.6	3.0	2.8	3.1
Life expectancy (years)	52	56	58	59	47
Infant mortality/1000 births	114	90	74	59	198
Birth rate (%)	43.3	45.1	41.1	37.4	47.3
Death rate (%)	14.2	11.7	11.7	9.8	16.7
Total fertility rate (%)	6.0	6.5	5.3	4.9	6.0
Dependency ratio	106	90	98.7	108.6	102.9
Access to safe water (%)	40	83	56	49	59
Gross enrolment-primary (%)	84	69	74	97	100
Pupil-teacher ratio (primary)	39	37	29	31	44
Illiteracy rate	49	50	40	31	27
% Population under poverty line	62	60	32	41	68

Source: Okuneye, P. A (2001): Dakar, Senegal

POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES

Attempts to address the problem of poverty have generally been hinged on four main approaches. They are:

a. Economic growth approach – This seeks to encourage broad based economic growth by focusing on developing human capital and capital stock formation. Human capital formation has to do with education, health, nutrition and housing needs of labour. The am is to improve the quality of labour and thus its productivity.
b. Basic needs approach – This approach calls for the provision of basic needs such as food, shelter, water sanitation, health care, basic education, transportation etc. Unless there is proper targeting, this approach may not directly affect the poor because of their inherent disadvantage in terms of political power and the ability to influence the choice location of government programs and projects.
c. Rural development approach – This approach assumes that poverty is more prevalent in rural areas and therefore focuses prominent attention on addressing what it considers the root of poverty. Emphasis in this approach is made on the provision of portable water, health care, and stimulating income generating activities of the rural dwellers. One basic problem of this approach is that it is difficult to focus attention on the real poor given that poverty in the rural area is pervasive.
d. Targeting approach – This approach favours directing poverty alleviation programmes to specific groups within the country. This includes approaches such as provision of micro-credit, school meals etc.

In Nigeria, the poverty alleviation measures implemented so far have focused more on economic growth, basic needs and rural development approaches. During the pre-SAP era, poverty reduction was never the direct focus of development planning and management. Government only showed concern for poverty reduction indirectly. For example, the objectives of the First National Development Plan in Nigeria included the development of opportunities in health, employment and education as well as improvement of access to these opportunities. During this era, many of the programmes had positive effects on poverty reduction although the target population for some of the programmes was not specified explicitly as poor people or communities (Ogwumike, 1998, 2001). Examples of these include the River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs), Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs), Agricultural Credit Guarantee scheme (ACGS), Rural Electrification Scheme (RES) and the Rural Banking Programme (RBP). Other notable poverty reduction programmes that were put in place in Nigeria before the SAP era include Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) of 1977, Free and Compulsory Primary Education (FCPE) in 1977, Green Revolution in 1980, and Low Cost Housing Scheme also in 1980.

Conscious policy effort by government towards poverty alleviation began during the SAP era. The severe economic crisis in Nigeria in the early 1980s worsened the quality of life of most Nigerians. So, between 1986 and 1993, government designed and implemented several poverty alleviation programmes (Table 3). Many of these programmes had varied impact on poverty alleviation. For example DFRRI was not only a radical departure from previous programmes, but also recognize the complementary relationships among basic infrastructures. National Directorate of Employment, (NDE) was the main organ of employment creation during this period. It emphasized the labour intensive approach to poverty alleviation. Many youths started some businesses arising from the NDE programmes. Other programmes such as National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA), the Strategic Grains Reserve Programme (SGRP), Primary Health Care Scheme and the Guinea Worm Eradication Programme have, in one way or the other, impacted on poverty reduction.

At the inception of the current democratic government, many Nigerians believed that poverty alleviation is the ultimate goal. The Government embarked on the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), later changed to the National Programme on Poverty Alleviation (NAPEP) which aimed at job creation at its poverty eradication strategy. However, as at the end of 2002, Nigerians were yet to feel the impact of this programme. Other persistent problems such as fuel scarcity seem to have hidden any real impact that this programme could manifest. A major feature of the poverty eradication approach of this government is a seeming failure to see the relationship between the economic situations at the household level on the one hand and on the other hand, the policies and politics at the macro level.

The current government has also tried to reduce poverty by an upward review of salaries and wages. As such, many of those who were pushed into temporary poverty, especially in the Civil Service were gradually being moved out of poverty. But inflationary trends that arose from salary increases need to be checked by ensuring that aggregate supply of goods and services are increased. This calls for an incentive structure that can encourage adequate investment in the real sectors of the economy. Today, foreign investments in the economy, even though rising when compared with the past, are still very low.

Table 3 Poverty reduction Programmes in Nigeria

Programme	Year Established	Target Group	Nature of Intervention
Directorate of Foods, Roads, and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI)	1986	Rural areas	Feeder roads, rural; water supply and rural electrification
National Directorate of Employment (NDE)	1986	Unemployed youths	Training, finance, and guidance
Better Life Programme (BLP)	1987	Rural women	Self-help and rural development, skills acquisition and health care
People's Bank of Nigeria (PBN)	1989	Underprivileged in rural and urban areas	Encouraging savings and micro-credit facilities
Community Banks (CB)	1990	Rural residents, micro enterprises in urban areas	Banking facilities
Family Support Programme	1994	Families in rural areas	Health care delivery, child welfare, youth development
Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP)	1997	Rural areas	Credit facilities to support cottage industries

Source: Oladeji and Abiola (1998)

There are however, two recent policies of the Federal government and some of the States and Local Governments that must be commended given their possible effects on poverty alleviation. At the Federal level, it is worthy to commend the establishment of Agricultural Development Fund of N10 billion. When a suggestion was made to this effect in 1995 in my inaugural lecture (Okuneye, 1995), it was stated that a non-bureaucratic body comprising the critical stakeholders in agriculture (e.g. NACCIMA, MAN, NASSI, FAMAN, FAMANR, UoAs, CBN and representatives of selected Research Institutes) should manage such fund. By this the private sector can be encouraged to contribute to the fund and see to its judicious utilisation for observable effect. A technical team should be set up to work out the details of this suggestion.

Secondly, the Federal Government about two years ago established a new form of the Nigerian Agricultural, cooperative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB) with the sum N6 billion. The caveat is that 50% of this should go to the small scale farmers/producers. This is a laudable programme and the fund needs to be monitored to ensure that it assists in alleviating poverty by removing bureaucracy and making it to get to real producers.

Furthermore, the Nigerian banking industry should also be commended for the establishment of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Fund initiated by the CBN. Today, the Fund has risen to N18 billion. This SMEs Fund is financing about 102 projects in 18 States of the Federation. The SMIEIs as the fund is often called, however, needs to target specific projects that will reduce poverty, increase the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and be easily sustainable. Some companies e.g. Shell and certain State Governments have shown real interest in alleviating poverty through their agricultural programmes and policy statements. The Ogun, Jigawa and Cross River State Governments are in the forefront of this vanguard.

POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT

Despite being blessed with abundant natural resources, Nigeria remains a poor country. Two out of three Nigerians (66%) live in extreme poverty as measured by the international standard of U.S. $1 per day in income (World Bank 2004b), and nine out of 10 (91%) live in moderate poverty on less than US $2 per day in income (World Bank 2004a). With the exception of a short period from 1985-92, income poverty has remained steady since 1980 (FOS 1999).

Poverty in Nigeria is concentrated in rural areas. Based on a relative poverty measure used by the FGN of the number of people living on less that 2/3 of mean per capita income, 64% of people who live in rural areas live below the poverty line, while the figure is only 35.4% for urban areas. In 1980, these proportions stood at 28% for rural areas and 17% for urban areas (FOS 1999). A greater proportion of households are poor in the North than in the South (see Map 1). The incidence of poverty is highest among households in which the head is engaged in agriculture as the main source of income (see Box 3). Agricultural growth is therefore important to the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger.

The rural-urban poverty gap is mirrored by similar gaps in terms of access to basic services. For example, 40% of urban households have access to electricity, compared to only 10% of rural households (Mbendi 2005). There is a marked rural-urban disparity in the access of rural and urban households to safe drinking water: 71-80% of urban households have access to safe drinking water, as compared to only 20-29% of rural households. Finally, in 2000 66% of urban households had access to improved sanitation services, as compared to only 45% of urban households (UN Social Indicators).

Health care follows a similar pattern, with large gaps in access between rural and urban areas and generally lower rates of access in the North. The consequences of differential access to health care services are a marked discrepancy in maternal care and child health indicators. Infant mortality is much higher in rural areas (121 deaths per 1,000 among children <5 years) than in urban areas (81 deaths per 1,000 among children <5 years), a result of lower incomes, lower levels of maternal education, and shorter birth intervals. Only 7% of rural children are fully vaccinated, as compared to 25% of urban children. Children who live in rural areas or in the North are more likely to be undernourished and more than 30% of children in the North-West are severely stunted.

In these developed nations, changing patterns of production and subsidies are driven by technological change and efforts to produce much more efficiently. The scenario is however different in the developing nations as their trade patterns have changed rapidly over the past 40 years. Agricultural exports have grown modestly compared to those of manufactured goods, resulting in a dramatic decline in the share of agricultural exports in total traded merchandise from about 50 per cent in the early 1960s to about 6 per cent by the year 2000. In a recent study the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) indicates that the overall agricultural trade surplus of these countries has virtually disappeared and predicts that by 2030 they will become, as a group, net importers of agricultural commodities, especially of temperate zone commodities. The FAO indicates that their agricultural trade deficit has been widening rapidly and could quadruple by 2030. This situation stresses the need for intensified agricultural research and development of agricultural technology.

In developed countries, typically 25% of the population lives in the countryside. Over the past few decades, agriculture has shifted away from employing traditional practices to emerge as large-scale enterprises concentrating production in the hands of fewer, larger, players that supply corporate, capital intensive, food processing industries. Production methods employed to satisfy increasing demands for inputs have adapted to produce high yields, relying on intensive land, water and chemical use and other techniques such as monoculture, increasing use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and intensive livestock production.

In Sub—Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa the poverty rate declined slightly, but not fast enough to reduce the number of people living in extreme poverty. About 900 million of the world's poor people live in rural areas, most of them farmers, many of them unaffected by the yield advances in industrial countries. Yet for many developing countries agriculture is the main source of economic growth, which is the cornerstone of poverty reduction. Therefore, sustainable agriculture and increasing productivity are essential. In the United Kingdom, for example, it took more than 1,000 years to increase wheat yields from 0.5 to 2 tonnes a hectare (in the 1950s) but only 40 years to triple yields to 6 tons a hectare, due to modern technologies.

Nigeria's vision for agricultural development is expressed in the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), the New Agricultural Policy (NAP), and the Rural Sector Strategy (RSS). NEEDS, adopted in 2004, is equivalent to the Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) of other countries. The overall strategic objective of NEEDS is to diversify the productive base of the economy away from oil and to foster market-oriented, private sector-driven economic development with strong local participation. NEEDS provides an overall framework for a concerted program of nationally coordinated sector strategies, including those for agriculture, environment, health, education, water, and infrastructure.

It plans to raise fiscal incentives to agriculture and review import waiver anomalies with appropriate tariffs for agricultural imports; and promotion of increased use of agricultural machinery and inputs through favourable tariff policy.
A major feature of the design of the new policy is the assemblage of the strategies for implementation as contained in another document that assigned roles not only to the tiers of government but also to the private sector and the community based development organizations. This should be the target of the government and other stakeholders.

Box 3: Agricultural Growth and Poverty Reduction

Broad-based agricultural growth can contribute significantly to poverty reduction, especially during the early stages of the structural transformation process. A wealth of empirical evidence shows that agricultural growth can reduce poverty in rural and urban areas, both directly through impacts on farm incomes and employment, as well as indirectly through the growth linkages discussed in Box 3 and impacts on food prices. For example:

- Based on 33 household surveys in India from 1951-1990, Ravallion and Datt (1996) found strong evidence that the urban-rural composition of growth matters to poverty reduction. While urban growth reduced urban poverty, its effect the national rate of poverty was negligible. On the other hand, rural growth reduced poverty in rural and urban areas and hence had a significantly positive effect on national poverty reduction.

- By disaggregating different types of households in Indonesia, Thorbecke and Jung (1996) found that the agricultural sector contributes the most to overall poverty reduction, followed by the services and informal sectors.

- Using data for 1985 to 1996 for China, Fan et al (2005) found that higher growth in agriculture reduces both rural and urban poverty, though the pro-poor effect is largest for rural areas. On the other hand, urban growth contributes only to urban poverty reduction; the effect of urban growth on rural poverty is neither positive nor statistically significant.

- Based on data from a broad sample of developing countries in the early 1970s and mid 1980s, Bourguignon and Morrison (1998) found that variables which measure agricultural productivity are important in explaining income inequality. Increasing agricultural productivity was found to be the most effective path for many countries to reduce poverty and inequality.

The growth-linkage effects of agriculture have proven most powerful when agricultural growth is driven by broad-based productivity increases in a rural economy dominated by small farms, such as that of Nigeria (Mellor, 1976). Small to medium-sized farm households typically have more favorable expenditure patterns for promoting growth of the local non-farm economy, including rural towns, since they spend higher shares of income on rural non-traded goods and services which are also generally more labor-intensive (Mellor, 1976; King and Byerlee; 1978; Hazell and Roell, 1983).

Furthermore, a community-based approach gives an avenue to the majority of people to participate in any government intervention that will go a long way to improving agricultural production in Nigeria. Thus, although sustainable impact is the ultimate answer to poverty alleviation, parallel direct interventions are needed to broaden the benefits of such growth to the poorest segments of the population and improve their living and educational standards.

According to the World Bank (1996), the design and implementation of efforts to reduce poverty must be guided by the needs of the poor as identified by the poor themselves. In this light, poverty reduction must not only address occupational issues, but also, infrastructural needs of the poor. Provision of electricity, potable water, health centres and formal schools will facilitate the sustainability of any impact of poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria.

SOME PRESCRIPTIVE MEASURES

The prescriptive measures are perhaps as varied as the types and causes of poverty. The first step Nigeria must do is to identify on regional or state basis, who are the poor and why specifically are they poor? Is it religious, social, cultural, locational, geographical, occupational, government inadequacy, etc, etc? Then build an appropriate poverty alleviation programme with necessary sustainable measures in place.

Secondly, there is the need for a mindset or real reorientation that will make Nigerians believe that success can be achieved when more efforts are put into programmes and projects. Our rulers and leaders need to be counselled that is not the volume of money acquired or appropriated that matters but the blessings of God. Many of them has so acquired high level of wealth that there are no resources to take care of the large majority of Nigerians who are now suffering and leaving from hands to mouths. A public project that should have been completed with N100 million is often over valued three or four fold and usually not even completed.

Thirdly, programmes, policies and actions at times run counter with the declared vision and mission of the political party in power. In some cases the government is consistently inconsistent in its policies. For an instance, the government wants to strengthen the Naira; it deregulates the importation of oil with attendant negative effect on the purchasing power of the Naira. It wants to improve the educational standard of Nigerians, whereas the budget on education continues to slide both in proportion and real value.

Fourthly, local knowledge is not developed which would have generated employment opportunities through reduction of costs e.g. in poultry production bitter leaves are known to increase the droppings of layers. Simple implements can be fabricated by local blacksmiths and fabricators if properly trained and funded.

Fifthly, communities can and should be used for employment generation and creating wealth. This entails assisting the community development projects based on the felt needs of the communities. The choice of this methodology arises from the fact that poor people are usually found among poor population and poor communities. Encouraging community development projects that are evolved by the communities themselves will go a long way to minimising poverty. To achieve success, reputable Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) can be employed in funding, training and monitoring Community Development (CD) projects. Through this, the unemployed will get jobs in their areas of abode, the Community Leaders or the Community Development Committees can be trained, charged with responsibilities and be held responsible for the success or failure in reducing poverty in his/her areas of domain.

- Production Incentives that Encourage growth in the Rural areas should be advanced in sub-Saharan nations;
- Increasing the Access of the Poor to Land and other productive Resources will go along way to reducing poverty and generate employment;
- Development of Infrastructural Facilities in the Rural Areas has the two pronged approach of reducing poverty and develop the rural areas;
- Commercialization of provision of inputs through incentives to the private sector for inputs such as fertilizers and other agrochemicals;
- Increasing Irrigated areas for food production which will make people to be gain fully employed even during the dry season;
- Encouraging Processing through adequate incentives to SMEs from such funds as the Agricultural Development Funds (N10.00billion) and from the National

Poverty Eradication Programme (N132.47 billion) and the Nigerian Agricultural, Cooperative and Rural development Bank (N6.00 billion)

- Market Information to Farmers' and Traders' Associations through them on regular basis by the ADPs, Universities, Research Institutes and NAERLS in Zaria;
- Regular Informal Educational Programmes for communities groups of individuals, the associations and the NGOs.

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