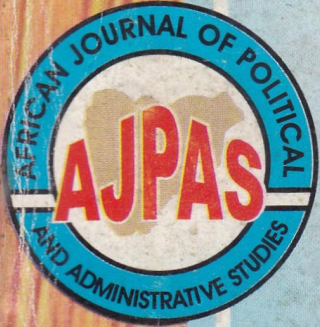


ISSN: 978-978-48246-2-0
VOL. [4] NO.1 SEPT.,2008



African Journal of
**POLITICAL &
ADMINISTRATIVE
STUDIES (AJPAS)**

Published by The Department
of Political Science and Public
Administration, Ebonyi State
University, Abakaliki.

**POVERTY ERADICATION IN NIGERIA
PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS**

BY

FRANK, E. O.
DEPT.OF POLITICAL SCIENCE/ PUB. ADMIN
BENSON IDAHOSA UNIVERSITY
BENIN- CITY

Abstract

The paper described poverty as the plague of our time and conceptualized it as a state of lack of command over existential issues. It then requests a paradigm shift in the identification of poverty from the World Bank standard of one US dollar as the basis of measurement of poverty. It contends that this is erroneous because it can not describe the dimensions of poverty prevalent in Nigeria. It asked if there was no poverty in Nigeria, when one US dollar was equivalent to seventy six (76) Kobo in the 80s.

It then posited that poverty is not a natural phenomenon but an outcome of the failures of public policy. It rejected the Calvinist position that theologically there must always be poverty. On the causes of poverty, it developed a five point causal schema and submitted that as a capitalist state, poverty is endemic in the system.

It called for the re-enactment of the values which prevailed in Africa-Nigeria pre-colonial, in which everybody was provided with the means of livelihood in the society in the current dispensation. It further observed that poverty being a man made phenomenon could be eradicated. The eradication of poverty call for a leadership with a political will, who will democratize development and evolve good governance. The resources for the eradication of poverty, minus corruption are readily available in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is the most pervasive phase of Nigerian development. Every year and time Nigerians are inundated with the huge amount of

monies released to address the elusive phenomenon-poverty, yet at every glance, it seems to be growing stronger. This paper looks at the problems associated with eradication of poverty as well as the prospects of doing so within the current socio-economic formation and raises several rhetorical questions to guide the analysis. Why is poverty so pervasive in Nigeria? Why have the several millions so far expended not able to mitigate and eradicate poverty? Is poverty a natural phenomenon? Are there prospects of eradication? These are the questions which this paper would be addressing in the course of evaluating the issues raised herein

The national census has just been concluded, putting Nigeria's estimated population at about 140 million. The details of the population estimate which this paper can not claim to be conversant with have not indicated what percentage of Nigerians still reside currently in the rural areas. Statistically therefore, the academics who were expectant of several ranges of database from the census as this author, have to rely on the United Nations record which posited that rural Nigeria houses more than 70 percent of the population (UN, 1993:132). An extrapolation of that would indicate that about 98 million Nigerians reside in the rural areas of Nigeria. By conception rural areas in Nigeria have identifiable characteristics which are noticeable in all parts of the country. The most significant of this uniqueness includes:

- i) The people are mostly poor.
- ii) The area is poor in social amenities (roads, electricity, pipe-borne water, the housing are of poor quality, usually of mud and thatch roofs)
- iii) The rural dwellers are mostly less educated.
- iv) They live by extractive industries i.e. extracting their resources from nature's abundance.
- v) They often have large family of at least five (5) children.
- vi) The children of the rural people often provide additional labor for them in the extractive industries farming, harvesting and cultivation. Many of the children grow up in homes in which all of the above or greater combination of the above factors prevails and therefore holds them down in poverty. The neglect of education and diet in their childhood means that vast sums must be spent in special training programmes, during youth if they are ever to have the skills needed to earn a living.
- vii) Educational institutions are hard to come by there, except where they are created from community efforts. Yet the people here are part of the census and of course an integral part of the calculus of the GDP/GNI.

This paper is not on rural poverty, but examines the issue holistically. Poverty whether in the urban or rural setting, is a crime by the sovereign. Its resolution would therefore need the generation of enormous political will and improving the quality of programming towards poverty

eradication.

The paper is organized into three sections with one (1) stating the submission of the paper, statement of the problem, conceptualization of the problem and the measurement of poverty. Section two (2), discusses Nigerian poverty profile, the causes of poverty, while section three (3) contains the problems to poverty eradication, implication of pervasive poverty the prospects and the conclusions as well as the recommendations.

The submissions of this Paper

In this paper, it is posited that;

- a) Poverty is not a natural phenomenon, but an outcome of the inadequacy of the public policy. The commonwealth was given to be held in common but the avarice of the few has resulted in the poverty of the majority.
- b) That the consistent application of the dollar regime as the basis for the evaluation and measurement of poverty rate and the well-being of a people, are not only a misnomer, but also misleading. In the 80s when a dollar was equivalent to 76 kobo and the Basic Travel Allowance (BTA) was fixed at four hundred N400 naira only did not mean there was no poverty. How does the one dollar a day paradigm explain this? The dollar regime is a manipulated fixture.
- c) The present economic regime pursued by Nigeria would enhance poverty rather than eliminate it.
- d) In African pre-colonial society, poverty was unknown because the stock of wealth was socialized. No one was left out of the commonwealth. Everyone was provided with means for survival. The state is capable of doing this presently if the political will is there.
- e) It is further posited that with a paradigm shift on the conception, management and focus, poverty being a human creation could be eradicated.

These positions would be consolidated one after the other.

The problems which this paper seeks strategic resolution include among others: - why should an overwhelming majority of the Nigerian populace be living in poverty at the time when the nation is earning the highest amount of revenues in her history? Why should existential issues such as water, roads and light still occupy the central position of Nigeria's quest towards development, 46 years after Independence? Secondly, the current paradigm in which anybody who earns less than one US Dollar a day is regarded as living in poverty by the World Bank is erroneous when applied in the Nigerian context. What happens where one earns that and is not self reliant, has no employment, can not pay for treatment of diseases which affects him and his household, has no shelter? Is such a person not in poverty?

Governance in Nigeria in the 21st century seems to be paradoxical.

In the face of increasing revenue and stock of wealth is the ever widening poverty gap between the 'haves' and the 'haves not'. This is a great challenge to both democratic and all other forms of Governments. The proportion of Nigerians who are faced with the problems of inadequate food (unbalanced) to eat, clothes to wear, and befitting shelter as well as sustainable development is ever increasing. It is more disheartening that Nigeria is endowed with abundance of natural resources.

Another dimension of poverty using the World Bank paradigm is that now that Nigeria has current estimated population figure, it is easier to obtain the per capita income/GNI of the country. Where this is above the one US dollar indices, given the rising crude oil prices in the global market, does that translate to the absence of poverty in Nigeria? Even if this is the case, how does that cover both the rural and urban poverty? What does that translate to in real terms? The consistent neglect of the rural areas by successive governments has abated urban poverty. What are the problems and the prospects of eradicating poverty in Nigeria? These are the challenges facing Nigeria today and the crux of the paper.

Poverty is a phenomenon that is better described than defined because of its amoebic nature. However, for the purpose of this paper, we shall adopt an operational framework for the analysis herein. Poverty is a lack of the means for meeting the needs of life, food, shelter, clothing, and medical care (Landis, 1980:411). Landis is inferring that when a man can not provide adequately for these life's basic necessities, then such a person is languishing in poverty. Further in his discourse elsewhere he averred that poverty is living on a level of income where there is not enough money to meet the minimum needs of food, clothing, shelter, and health (Landis, 1980:416). These are clear perspectives of poverty. But while they are relevant to the Nigerian situation, it raises a structural problem, that of income level. In Nigeria, the biggest employer of labor is the Government. and the number of staff in the Federal Public Service is 996,744, while the total number of political office holders is 1,448 (Ekaette, 2003). In Nigeria, the average household is seven including the father and mother. The application of this negligible fraction of the total public servant as a basis for the discourse of poverty consequent upon the possession of income is problematic. These are because the bulk of the population is in the rural areas and are without employment through which income level could be determined.

Ravalion and Bidani (1994) opined that poverty is the lack of command over basic consumption needs. This perception captures the views of this writer, who sees the phenomenon as a state of the inability of the afflicted to obtain the basic needs of life from the income he generates, whenever he wants to do so. This connotes that those in the poverty social

class, can not at all times dip their hands into their pocket and provide the kind of meals they want at anytime, cannot do same for a decent housing and most of all can not be self-reliant. By implication, they can not contribute to national development through taxes. This correlates with the view of Eminue (2005) who adopting the conception of the Development Prospects submitted that poverty is a state where an individual is not able to cater adequately for his/her basic needs of food, clothing and shelter, is unable to meet social and economic obligations; lacks gainful employment, skills, assets and self-esteem; and has limited access to social and economic infrastructure such as education, health, potable water and sanitation; and consequently, has limited chance of advancing his/her welfare to the limit of his/her capacities (cited in Development Prospects 1999:1). While Obadan (1977) sees it as state of lack of physical necessities, assets and income—a condition which results in 'deprivation, social inferiority, isolation, physical wideness (disillusionment), vulnerability, seasonality, powerlessness and humiliation (cited in Eminue, 2005:505).

The implications of these conceptions of poverty are that those who are in the poverty social class have some unique symbols. They are not in any employment hence have no income, where they have incomes they are very low. They can not afford to see a doctor when sick; they have inadequate clothing, housing, they are mostly in agriculture when employed, with low yield. Those in the urban centers have nothing but unskilled labor power to offer in the market society, as labor becomes a commodity in the market place. Even at this their bargaining power is very low. Those who are able to join the public services are able to obtain only subsistence income, as a result of inflation. A subsistence income means that which gives family enough money to survive, without extra for medical care and other necessities. A family living in poverty does not have enough income to buy the basic necessities for survival food, clothing housing etc. The situations herein described the Nigerian socio-economic formation, in both the formal and the informal sectors. These are prevalent in the rural setting. The bulk of Nigerians are in these locations. This translates to the fact that the bulk of Nigerians are infected and affected by the poverty viruses. It should however be remembered that the potential of poverty and relative social deprivation to translate into violence of disturbing proportion is enormous. It is therefore important to address it.

The discourse on the conceptions and measurement aspects of poverty has become much more sophisticated since the early 1970s, when the simple head-count measure using a rather arbitrary poverty line for income or spending was the dominant mode of aggregation. Even without precise poverty measures or poverty lines, one can draw on stochastic dominance criteria to make unambiguous comparative rankings of poverty

if the cumulative distribution function of the living standard indicator in one case lies completely outside that in another (Atkinson 1987). Poverty survey often rank households from the poorest to richest based on per capita income. Per capita rather than household income was chosen to enable comparisons with standard per capita poverty measures of the World-Bank (Harrison et al 2004:29). Milanovic and Jovanovic had introduced three dimension for looking at poverty during the depression in Russia, thus; "subjectively poor" that is households whose view of the minimum income for an adult is greater than their actual adult equivalent income. "Socially subjective poor" and those whose income per equivalent adult is less than the official all Russia poverty line per working adult (Milanovic et al 1999:553). These and many others are based on Western conceptions and above all most of these measures of poverty are urban-based when the bulk of the poor in Nigeria are basically rural based. These views of poverty are logically suspect, conceptually fuzzy and empirically inappropriate in the treatment of poverty in Nigeria. This explicates the failures of attempts at poverty eradication in Nigeria. This is because the applied approaches are often adopted from the Western models with its different poverty sociology.

Drewnowski and Scott observed that poverty could also be measured in terms of the inability to meet basic physical needs in the following ways; nutrition, measured by factors such as intake of calories and protein; shelter measured by the quality of dwelling and degree of overcrowding; and health, measured by factors such as the rate of infant mortality and the quality of available medical facilities (Haralambos *etal*, 1980:140). The further attempt to measure the phenomenon specified a poverty line, sometime referred to as headcount measure. It is applied by counting the number of people below the poverty-line income (Sen, 1999:360) The World Bank on the other hand recognized two poverty paradigms (a) any household in 1985 whose purchasing power parity (PPP) was below \$275 was considered extremely 'poor'. Given the spatial implications of these measurement types, Nigeria attempted to evolve a system. Eminue (2005) averred that in 1997 N3, 290 per head per month at 1997 current prices, implying that an average family size of five required N13, 462 per month to live above the poverty line was established by the Vision 2010 committee. But an examination of the distribution of poverty between the rural and the urban Nigeria indicated that the rural areas accounted for 73% of the poor and 95% of the extremely poor in 1992 (Vision 2010 Report). This was the closest attempt to study and understand the morphology of poverty in Nigeria. But this was subject to considerable statistical problems and the termination of the regime which initiated this, ended the application of that model.

The other measurements dimensions are extremely western to the

point that they can hardly be applicable to Nigeria as a result of spatial differentials. Capturing of poverty in Nigeria is problematic as stated earlier. What then is to be done? We shall return to this in subsequent section of this discourse. In the mean time let us look at Nigeria's poverty profile.

Nigeria's Poverty Profile

The incident of poverty in Nigeria is spread all through the geo-political zones. But the northern areas seemed to be the worst affected, which has made some people to erroneously assume that poverty in Nigeria is basically a northern phenomenon. This could be gleaned from table I below.

Table 1 Nigeria's Poverty Profile

S/N	State	% incidence of Poverty
1	Jigawa	95.0
2	Kebbi	89.7
3	Kogi	86.6
4	Bauchi	86.3
5	Kwara	85.2
6	Yobe	83.3
7	Zamfara	80.9
8	Gombe	77.0
9	Sokoto	76.8
10	Adamawa	71.7
11	Bayelsa	20.0
12	Anambra	20.1
13	Abia	22.3
14	Oyo	24.1
15	Imo	27.4
16	Rivers	29.1
17	Enugu	31.1
18	Ogun	31.7
19	Osun	32.4
20	Edo	33.1

Source: CBN, compiled from ThisDay Newspaper, March 14 2007 p.76 by the author.

The above table indicates that from 1-10 where the incidence is very high percentiles of the total population are all northern, while 11-22 are southern states. This makes the issues raised in the statement of the problem more pungent, when considered against the total number of population figures of these states. However, whether it is the north or south is immaterial. The problem deserves eradication in the face of resource endowment in Nigeria and the negative impact in which the incidence of poverty connotes in the socio economic development of the country. In table two (ii) below, the pervasiveness of the incidence of poverty in Nigeria against the total population in the states cited, makes the resolution of the phenomenon an urgent one.

Table II
Nigerian Poverty ratio against State Population

S/N	States	% of Poverty	Population	% of the Poor & excluded people
1	Jigawa	95.0	4,348,649	4,131,216.55
2	Kebbi	89.7	3,238,628	2,905,049.3
3	Kogi	86.6	3,278,487	2,839,169.74
4	Bauchi	86.3	4,676,465	4,035,789.29
5	Kwara	85.2	2,371,089	2,020,167.82
6	Yobe	83.3	2,321,591	1,933,888.30
7	Zamfara	80.9	3,259,846	2,637,215.41
8	Gombe	77.0	2,353,879	1,812,486.83
9	Sokoto	76.8	3,696,999	2,839,295.23
10	Adamawa	71.7	3,168,101	2,271,528.41
11	Bayelsa	20.0	1,703,358	340,671.6
12	Anambra	20.1	4,182,032	840,588.43
13	Abia	22.3	2,833,999	631,981.77
14	Oyo	24.1	5,591,589	1,347,572.94
15	Imo	27.4	3,934,899	1,078,162.32
16	Rivers	29.1	5,185,400	1,508,951.40
17	Enugu	31.1	3,257,298	1,013,019.67
18	Ogun	31.7	3,728,098	1,181,807.06
19	Osun	32.4	3,423,535	1,109,225.34
20	Edo	33.1	3,218,332	1,065,267.89
21	Kano	NA	9,383,687	NA
22	Lagos	NA	9,013,534	NA
23	Kaduna	NA	6,066,562	NA
24	Katsina	NA	5,792,578	NA
25	Borno	NA	4,151,193	NA
26	Delta	NA	4,098,391	NA
27	Niger	NA	3,950,249	NA
28	Akwa Ibom	NA	3,920,208	NA
29	Ondo	NA	3,441,024	NA
30	Cross River	NA	2,888,966	NA
31	Ekiti	NA	2,384,212	NA
32	Ebonyi	NA	2,173,501	NA
33	Taraba	NA	2,300,736	NA
34	Nassarawa	NA	1,863,275	NA
35	Plateau	NA	3,178,712	NA
36	Benue	NA	4,219,244	NA
37	FCT, Abuja	NA	1,405,210	NA
			140,003,542	

Source: Compiled by the author from ThisDay Newspaper, March 14, 2007 p.76, CBN & MofNews Jan-Feb 2007 Vol. 6 No.3 p.7

Table II above indicates the degree of poverty in the various states in Nigeria. It shows the gap that exists in the distribution of the resources in Nigeria. In Jigawa state for instance 95 per cent of the people out of a population of 4,348,649 are living in poverty. This translate to 4,131,216.55 people are members of the poverty club. In Edo state in the Niger delta region of the country, 1,065,267.89 people are living in poverty out of the state population of 3,218,332. Less than two million people are living reasonable life in this state. In the southeast zone where Abia state is located, 631,981.77 people are members of this ignoble club of the poor and excluded, out of a population of 2,833,999 this represent 22.3 per cent of the total population. This is the trend in all other states of the federation even in those ones in which the percentage rate of the total population in the poverty bracket could not be obtained.

The implication of this situation is that life expectancy at birth, infant mortality rate school enrollment ratio, gender equality in education, employment etc, and democratic freedom (freedom to choose own political leaders)...achievement of better nourishment, shelter, health, education, living condition and better conditions of employment for low-end poverty groups (Nyong, 2005:15). The relevant question then is, if a large percentage of the population can not access these indices of development then Nigeria is far from development. The exclusion of these large portions of the population to contribute to development as a result of poverty is a challenge to both the government and the civil society. What is responsible for this situation?

Causes of Poverty: Explanatory Schema:

There are several views on the causal factors of poverty in the society, for orderliness the causes are herein factored into five broad groups thus;

a) Global Factors

Global Economic History taught the expediencies of Keynesian economics upon which the Marshall plan was based, and how this moved Europe out of the depression. Today the global trend is towards the free market. The prescription for and the adoption by Nigeria of these models of development engenders poverty in the land. This is because Nigerian capitalism is not developing as those of America and Western Europe. Capitalism rest on 'investments' and 'production' Nigeria's own rests on commission and trading. It is a 'cripple capitalism' system which can not generate the expected benefits. The usual assumption is that increases in trade will raise production and hence growth, which in turn is the key for eradicating poverty. The old age assumption that increase in wealth in the hands of the few in a liberal economy, would lead to investment,

employment and welfare to the poor via taxes is false. In Nigeria, these groups including the Multinational companies evade taxes. When the commonwealth is privatized into few hands, the people are left with nothing, while the wealth is frittered abroad.

The same global fad called for, the removal of subsidies from public services to enhance the efficiency of the private sector. But at the same time America and Western Europe subsidizes its agriculture till now. This keeps the farmers over there on their farms, their product are cheap and are purchased off them by the state to keep cultivation on. In Nigeria the removal of the unending subsidy on petroleum products have not only added to the poverty level but more penury. The adaptation of global development fads which are not suited to Nigeria's level of development generates poverty.

b) Failure of Public Policy

Nigeria's public policies always ignore the poor and the excluded in its conception and implementation. The externalities of the public policy generate further poverty. Why have existential issues such as roads, water, light and shelter always ended up in the cities. Ironically, the bulk of the resources spent in the cities are derived from the rural areas with the attendant degradation of rural land. The lack of balance in development results in rural-urban migration, leading to the growth of urban slums.

*The mis-management of the economy and extensive corruption resulting from 'prebendal politics' depletes the needed resources to extend development to the poor and excluded people. Consequent upon this phenomenon, either the state must control industrial power in the interest of its citizens, or industrial power will control the state in the interests of its possessors (Laski, 1980:109). The state becomes the property of the petty-bourgeois whose interests are at variance with that of the poor and excluded people.

Ill-health of the people results in the long time absence of medical facilities. This leads to a situation in which some people cannot engage in certain duties arising from their ill-health. This is as result of prolonged absence of medical facilities. People who grew up in poverty and lack good diet and proper health care would have health related deficiencies which discount them to engage in certain activities.

c) Economic Factors

There is no integration in the economy between the activities of the rural and urban centers. This would have kept income flowing backward and forward. The national economy is equally disarticulated.

The Nigerian 'crippled capitalism' is not 'investing' and not 'producing' as demanded by classical capitalism. As a result there can not be employment generation, and 'up' and 'down' stream economic activities. This character of the Nigerian economy can hardly generate employment or skills. Poverty is the outcome of such an economy.

d) **Social factors**

These are made up of socio-cultural factors whose outcome is poverty. They include: Embrace of traditional /Islamic education. This leads to the acquisition of no skill and poor adaptation of modern methods of doing things in the 'mass society'. This is because the economy which has assumed the character of a mass society makes less use of manual labor or unskilled work of any kind. This leaves those unskilled persons who had chosen to follow this traditional education system within the poverty penumbra. This is the origin of the '*Almajiris* (street urchins or street children, who become potential weapons in times of social upheavals) syndrome in northern Nigeria, this explains its dominance of the poverty club in Nigeria.

*Poor by age: There are many people whose parents have put in their youthful life for the state, now old and retired. The income at retirement falls above the official poverty line but as a result of 'hyper-inflation' and many other factors which attack a constant income the benefit loses meaning. In Nigeria the story of retired public servants is a pathetic one. They rarely get paid as at when due. The children of these people who are in school get thrown out for fees, their feeding become problematic, rent for housing, clothing etc drives the families into child abuse and further into the abyss of poverty.

* Poor by reasons of dependent- Nigerians like other Africans have large families size and extended dependants. It takes more income to support large families than a small one. Two families with equal income, the one with a large member would be submerged in poverty than the one with three members. This is true in the rural, as is in the urban areas. Nigerians have large family sizes; this leaves no income at all for investment. This is the source of 'Areas boys' syndrome in the south.

* Working Poor (in employment) - In Nigeria many are working in jobs that are not covered by the minimum wage law (both at states and local government levels), recall that the total public servants in Nigeria is 996,744, this translate to a little over one million when the military is included. This is a negligible proportion of the entire population. The reform is recruiting more people into the class of the unemployed in Nigeria.

c) **Miscellaneous causes**

Some are poor by reason of geography. There are regions and state

which are lacking natural resources. These states or regions are poor and this correlates to the people. This makes the politics of revenue allocation and inter-governmental relations a fierce one in Nigeria. Included in this class are issues of environmental degradation, desertification, droughts and destruction of the land through oil exploration and the destruction of aquatic lives.

Policy explanations

Earlier in this paper it had been asserted that poverty is not a natural state of affairs. The Christian fathers, saints Ambrose, Aquinas and Isidore of Seville, contended that private property is not by nature, nature only produced a common right, gave all things to all men. But the use and habit which man developed produced private right. Though lawful but it was not natural. Saint Ambrose however explicated the position of the Christian fathers on private property, stating that, God meant the world to be a common possession of all men, and to produce its fruits for all, it was avarice which produced the rights of property. He however contended that though private property is not unlawful, it was not a part of natural law; be that as it may, almsgiving must be an act of justice and not charity. This is because those who are in possession of it have stolen from the commonwealth. The appropriation of the commonwealth by some means that the property can not go round everybody. Poverty as a result of denials started from this point.

The Calvinistic believe that God wished some people to be wealthy and others poor' that God 'knoweth when and to whom he will give riches,, that 'the general (sic)rule...is to whip and punish the wandering(sic) beggars' and make them in conditions of virtual slavery; and that the poor have only themselves to blame, having adopted' idle, irregular and wicked courses' regarded as object of God's hatred, as symbols of depravity, and as a rebuke only to themselves, while it was considered fashionable for the rich to spend money on themselves even if the poor were suffering (Baker, 1927:209 cited in Eminiuc, 2005:506). It is evidenced that poverty is not a natural phenomenon. The Calvinist position is a deviation. We are all enjoined to eek a living out of the commonwealth. This is because ultimately the welfare of the community is built upon the happiness of the individual who make up the community. Secondly, the citizen is born into a world which if rationally organized; he can live only by the sweat of his brow. Society owes him the occasion to perform this function. To leave him without access to the means of existence is to deprive him of that which makes possible the realization of his personality. Public policy should hence be applied justly to address the situation. The prevalence of poverty is synonymous with the failure of public policy.

It is also the position of this paper, that the current paradigm of

evaluating poverty is flawed. Consequent upon which the need for what comprise poverty in Nigeria need a definition. This is because what encompass it need to be culturally defined. For what constitutes poverty in the American context may be the position of a very wealthy person in Nigeria when all the indices are evaluated together. The earlier attempt by the Vision 2010 committee was in the right direction. The process should be revived and concluded. Poverty in the Nigerian context must be defined.

Elsewhere in this paper, reference has been made to the concept of 'crippled capitalism'. This is a description of the form of capitalist development in Nigeria. Nigeria's economic policy and the reforms policy are geared towards being a perfect liberal democratic state, whose economic version is capitalism. Again it was posited that capitalism strives on 'investment' and 'production'. This is absent in the character of the Nigerian bourgeois. Consequently the elusive gains of the liberal economy is absent in Nigeria, and would continue to be- because poverty is the reverse side of buccaneer pursuit of profit. A reformed, privatized economy has a little means to control the investment directions in that economy. Profits are appropriated by the few, with no chance of socializing the profits generated in the economy. This market society creates few wealthy men with a large army of the poor. The system being pursued by Nigeria has an inbuilt poverty regime.

The eradication of poverty is not novel, but a phenomenon which was common in Africa nay Nigeria pre-colonial era. African Socialism was based on African consciousness of caring for his brother's need, sharing the commonwealth and providing him with the means of livelihood within the kinship system. Human needs, is what both the liberal democratic and the socialist models of development all aim at. In this case, poverty must take the center stage in the evolution of both public and economic policies for it had been done before. Poverty is the current bourbon plague of our time.

Poverty Eradication: Problems

There are three major positions which are often touted that poverty is a natural phenomenon which makes its eradication impossible. These false premises rest on the Calvinist thesis, which we have in the course of this paper debunked in connection with the duties of the state to its citizens. The second position radiates from the chosen path of economic development 'capitalism'. This is a particular mode of production in which labor becomes a commodity like any other object of exchange (Dobb, 1972:56). It is a market society in which everybody wears a commodity 'mask'. You are either a seller of goods and skills or a buyer. The bourgeois hire the labor of the proletariat in the expectation of the fact that the value of the product he is expected to produce and exchange would generate surplus value, which would be appropriated as profit. Profit it is said can not be

socialized to the unskilled who did not contribute in the generation of the profit.

This problem becomes more acute when the state is viewed from the Marxist perspective as a committee of the ruling class to protect their collective interest. The state seen from this angle, cannot eradicate poverty. Any State founded and sustained on the capitalist principles, would only be committing class suicide in wanting to eradicate poverty.

The third perspective conducted to Harold Laski's (1980) famous role of the state in the poverty saga when he opined that 'either the state must control industrial power in the interest of its citizens, or industrial power will control the state in the interests of its possessors'. The nature of the problems as presented above led to the view that it should not be expected that any government whose main concern is with the efficiency of a capitalist economy is going to take effective steps to abolish the low wage sector: such government measures, like what we see in our society is expected to do little except reduce the biting effect of poverty (Kincaid, 1973). The inadequacy of these positions is their faith in the 'culture of poverty' thesis, that being poor at one time means being poor always (Zanden, 1979:512). This is not true. These are the major *raison d'etre* for advocating and executing poverty alleviation rather than eradication programs, which in any case did not always come out of rigorous intellectual refinement. Programs such as better life for rural dwellers people (BLP), family support programme (FSP), family economic advancement (FEAP), and National directorate of employment (NDE), the People's bank of Nigeria (PBN) were all characterized by lack of intellectual refinement and adjustment. Their counterpart in the democratic dispensation, have not fared differently. The quality of these programs stemmed from the background already discussed, hence they were only palliatives, with no impacts. They were essentially meant to benefit certain class of people, who are often not in the majority.

Implications of pervasive poverty

Poverty has considerable implication for both the individual and the economy. Table II, "Nigerian poverty ratio against state population" indicated a pathetic level of poverty in Nigeria. In Jigawa state according to the table in reference, 95 per cent or 4,131,216.65 of the population are members of the poverty club. 5 per cent of the populace controls the entire wealth of the state. 95 per cent of the people are characterized by poverty, hunger, ignorance and diseases, gender inequality etc. These are replicated in all the states of the federation as shown even in those states where the current databases are not available (NA). The implications are:

i) At the state/regional level, 95 per cent of the populations are excluded from contributing to development of the state and Nigeria as a whole. This

is because they are not able to generate income on continuous basis out of economic activity, and thereby pay taxes, which would be used in national economic development. The state and the national economy are by this circumstance short-changed because its ability to generate revenue internally is stultified. The state economy becomes dependent on the monthly fiscal inter-governmental relations (IGR).

ii) At the individual level there exist, lack of self confidence, gender inequality, low contribution to the national wealth in agriculture (by the use of archaic technology of production as a result of lack of education) high infant and maternal mortality rate.

iii) At the level of national economy, with such a significant population excluded from contributing to national economic build-up it becomes dependent. Furthermore, the national economy becomes lacking in the productive capacity to meet their domestic requirements, and traditionally relied on the developed countries to supply them the goods and services they require but can not produce... the current manifestations of economic malfunctioning of the Nigerian economy such as inflation, poverty unemployment and balance of payments deficits... (Osagie, 2007:10). The pervasive poverty provides recruits for social unrest for the large army of unemployed youths who become ready utility vehicle for politicians, criminal activities and other social vices. It is instructive to note that poverty is more dangerous than atomic bomb; therefore it should be eradicated since it is a man made phenomenon.

Prospects

Pursuance to the task of poverty eradication, it is herein postulated that the necessary condition to confront this problem is first of all the institutionalization of a leadership that can muster the political will for a frontal attack on poverty in Nigeria. This is the same problem that the epic novelist Professor Chinua Achebe addressed in his work 'The trouble with Nigeria'. The leadership should then be made to know that people have rights not only for freedom from want but also to adequate housing, medical care, and recreation. The lack of these amenities is defined as poverty. The government then should eradicate poverty through programs that strengthen and enrich the quality of life of the people. This is simply leadership. Leadership is intricately linked with orientation. A leader should have clear ideas of his goal and ambitions. At the national level, he should understand the goal of his country at the material time. If such goals are not properly articulated, as seems to be the case in Nigeria he may commission a group of knowledgeable citizens to produce a blueprint of guiding principles and national goals (Osagie, 2007:2). This is the means to

eradicating poverty in Nigeria.

Secondly, the Government is hereby reminded that the citizen has a right to work. He is born into a world where, if rationally organized he can live only by the sweat of his brow. Society owes him the occasion to perform his functions. To leave him without access to the means of existence is to deprive him of that which makes possible the realization of his personality. A man's citizenship is the duty to contribute his instructed judgment to the public good (Laski, 1980). It is government's duty to provide employment for the actualization of the citizenship.

Thirdly, there is need for democratizing development. This is the act of ensuring that development reaches every class in the state and the state desists from class defined development. This is avoiding the creation of infrastructure that is used by a particular class only. It includes also the dissemination of knowledge base skills necessary for development. Equipping those in governance with the skill for designing proper policy is a necessary part of this function.

Closely related to the above is the principle of good governance and poverty eradication. Considerable researches have shown that these two are fundamentally linked. This is so because when governments perform their fundamental role, it enhances the happiness of all men. Indicators should be developed to show the impact of governance on the poor and excluded people periodically.

Fourthly, the questions to ask in the public policy conception and execution in Nigeria are;

What is happening to unemployment?

What is happening to Medicare?

What is happening to shelter?

What is happening to education?

What is happening to self-reliance?

When the answers to these questions are in the affirmative in both the rural and urban areas, and the provision encapsulates people in the lowest social classes in Nigeria, then without doubt poverty is being eradicated. A continuation of the policies would certainly banish poverty.

Finally, the Right base approach is considered a tenable prospect for the eradication of poverty in Nigeria and elsewhere. The Right base approach is essentially an approach, in which the poor and the excluded people get sensitized and their confidence built, to engage consistently and persistently the duty-bearers to demand their rights. Demanding from them the provision of not only 'public good' but also the existential issues (food, water, healthcare, education, gender-equity, roads, shelter and light) but also other conditions necessary to live a tolerable life. This is on the basis that the state, which demands allegiance from the people, owes them duties

to provide same. A social activist Otive Igbuzor, described Right base approach as a participatory development approach that recognizes the rights of the poor and the excluded people as well as the duty of government to meet these rights. Rights base approach recognizes that the poor and excluded people are entitled to fundamental human rights solely by reason of being human. These rights are not privileges. They are not depended on grace or benevolence of rulers. These rights are fundamental, inalienable, universal, interdependent and indivisible (Igbuzor, 2006:6). It is believed that consistent engagement, would lead to the provision of these rights.

Lastly, the attainment of the above position is conditioned upon the policy of relative isolation, in which case, events on the global scale would not significantly cause policy deviation and distraction. The commonwealth is to be socialized, while there should be an embrace of reproductive health rights by women on socialization of education. This would automatically take care of the family sizes. Finally, idle funds, unclaimed dividends and progressive taxation are to be mobilized to provide for groups and regions made poor by reason of geography and other causal factors. These should be done simultaneously with the frontal attack on corruption.

Conclusion

The paper discussed the current social plague in Nigeria, poverty. It identified five causal schemas responsible for poverty in Nigeria. These are global, failed public policy, economics, social and miscellaneous factors. It evaluated the rationale why governments in Nigeria often embark on poverty alleviation rather than eradication programs, and debunked the 'Calvinist view of this, while reminding the government of its original role and responsibility to the citizens, arising from the social contract theory.

It then advocated that poverty could be eradicated if there is the political will to take independent and people centered decisions. It submitted that whenever the public policy is directed at unemployment, inequality, self-reliance, shelter, medicare and education for those at the lowest social rung of Nigeria's society-then poverty would be eradicated.

On the resources to do this, it proposed attack on corruption and the mobilization of idle funds such as unclaimed dividend and others and progressive taxation to fund the scheme, along with he consolidated revenue of the state. It concluded that it is possible to eradicate poverty which is not a natural phenomenon whenever public policies are guided by a commitment to more equitable distribution of benefits on the basis of who gets what, where, why, and how.

Poverty eradication programme envisaged that the 'poor man' of today would not be in that social class after a while, when the catalyst of

poverty eradication would have been injected, whereas poverty reduction presupposes that poverty is eternal and its pangs should be mitigated. In the final analysis, when the confidence of the poor and the excluded people has been built to engage the duty-bearers persistently, this would certainly results in the eradication of poverty or its dialectics.

Endnotes

Almajiris- these young children mostly under the age range of 5-6 years sent by their parents to live with the Islamic teachers. They are taught the recitation of the Koran. After which they are sent out to beg for alms for the Mallam-the Islamic teachers.

References

- Atkinson (1987) cited in Research on Poverty and Development Twenty Years after Redistribution with Growth, by Pranab Bardhan in Annual World Bank Conference on Development ed Michael Bruno and Boris Pleskovic The World Bank Washington D.C
- Dobb, M. (1972). The Essence of Capitalism in the Capitalist System - A Radical Analysis of American Society Edwards, R. C., Reich, M. Weisskopf, T. E.(ed) London: Prentice-Hall Inc
- Ekaette, U. J. (2003). Brief on Monetization of Fringe Benefits in the Public Service of the Federation-circular No SGE 19/S.47/C.1/11/371 June 27 p.10
- Eminue, O.E. (2005). Public Policy Analysis and Decision-Making Lagos: Concept Publications Ltd
- Harrison, G.W, Rutherford, T.F, Tarr, D.G and Gurgel, A (2004). Trade Policy and Poverty Reduction in Brazil in the World Bank Economic Review. 18(3).
- Haralambos, M and Heald, R. N. (1980). Sociology: Themes and Perspectives. New York. Oxford University Press.
- Igbuzor, O. (2006). Bulletin-ActionAid International Nigeria, No. 2 Jan-June 2006, A Publication of ActionAid International Nigeria.
- Kincaid, J. C. (1973). Poverty and Equality in Britain: A study of Social Security and Taxation. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books
- Landis, P. H. (1980) Sociology Massachusset: Ginn And Company; Columbia-USA

- Laski, H. (1980). A Grammar of Politics. London: George Allen & Unwin London
- Milanovic, B and Javanovic, B (1999) Changes in the Perception of the Poverty line During the Depression in Russia, 1993-96 in The World Bank Economic Review 13(3).
- Nyong, M. O. (2005). Public Policy, Public Sector Economics and Management in Nigeria. Calabar: A & A Communications
- Osagie, E. (2007). The New Nigerian Economy from Poverty to Prosperity Benin-City: AFBSN Publishers.
- Ravalion, M. and Bidani, B. (1994). How Robust is a poverty profile? The World Bank Economic Review 8.1 cited in Agbor, U.I. (2006) Poverty and Poverty Reduction in Nigeria: The Path we did not take in Calabar Journal of Politics and Administration Vol.3 (1) p. 61
- Sen, A. K. (1987). The Standard of Living. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
- United Nations Human Development Report 1993 New York: Macmillan Publishers
- Zanden-Vander, J.W. (1979). Sociology. New York: John Wiley & Sons.