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Poverty Incidence in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The major challenge that every responsive and responsible government must contend with is to make life better and more meaningful for its citizenry, irrespective of whether such government is a democratic or a military dictatorship if the regime is to have relevance and continue to enjoy legitimacy in the eyes of the governed. In Nigeria, every successive government since this democratic dispensation in 1999 has put up one strategy or the other aimed at alleviating the sufferings of the people and putting smiles on the faces of the governed. It is important to critically evaluate how recently Nigeria has come to be taunted as the prospective world capital for poverty considering the various poverty alleviating programmes, reforms and strategies, which have been undertaken by successive Nigerian governments and the reasons behind the success/failure of these programmes.

Keywords: Poverty, Population, Human Development Index, Economic growth.

INTRODUCTION

According to the Nigeria economic report released in July 2014 by the World Bank, over 80 million Nigerians, constituting about 42.4% of its total population estimated at about 187 million currently live on less than N900 a day which is below the poverty line and apparently it can get worse. According to World Poverty Clock, Nigeria's rising overpopulation will pose a problem now, rather than in 2030 or 2050. By February 2018, Nigeria had overtaken India as the country with the most people in extreme poverty. For purposes of comparative analysis, India has 5 times the population of Nigeria. According to World Bank standards, living in extreme poverty means living on less than the equivalent of about N680 per day. People living in extreme poverty are unable to meet even the barest minimal needs for survival.

In 2015, the UN set up the Sustainable Development Goals - SDG and the first among the goals is to "eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere by 2030". However to achieve this feat globally, about 90 people need to leave extreme poverty every minute of the day to ensure eradication of poverty totally by 2030 and to achieve this in Africa, 57 people have to leave extreme poverty every minute and in Nigeria, 12 people per minute. As you can imagine, this is not the case with Nigeria. In fact, the opposite is the case with Nigeria where about 7 people are going into extreme poverty every minute and this can principally be attributed to Nigeria's population which is growing faster than its economy.

Between 1990 and 2013, Nigeria's population increased by 81 percent and by 2050, according to the UN, Nigeria will be

third most populous country in the world only behind India and China. While poverty is billed to wildly increase in 2018, the IMF projects Nigeria's GDP to rise by only 0.8 percent in 2018, after the 2016 economic recession which slowed down the economy. Nigeria's 2018 record budget of about N9.1trillion which was recently signed into law by the President Muhammadu Buhari, on Wednesday, June 20, 2018 will be running on a deficit and funded by much borrowing with government debts already on the rise. On the contrary, in recent times, Nigeria's recent dwindling oil wealth due to the global oil price reduction, with oil being

Perhaps, the major problem facing all African nations today is the eradication of extreme poverty which every government has built in as part of its developmental programs. In fact, the major challenge every responsive and responsible government must contend with is to make life better and more meaningful to the citizenry irrespective of whether such a government is a democratic one or a military dictatorship if such a government is to continue to have relevance and enjoy legitimacy in the eyes of the governed. Nigeria continues to swim in this pond of damning statistics as each new worldwide rating is released. The latest is that Nigeria, currently with an estimated population of 198 million people (projected for the year ending December, 2017) will have overtaken India with about 1.3 billion people, as the country with the highest number of poor people in the entire world.

According to a Brookings Institution report concluded at the end of May, 2018 Nigeria has over 87 million poor people (compared with India's 73 million), though, Vice President, Professor Yemi Osinbajo in 2016 had echoed a Nigerian Bureau of Statistics report which quoted the number of

the mainstay of its economy, means its oil-dependent GDP will be affected too. The country's economy had recently been hit hard by the recession in the country which has been exacerbated by a high rate of unemployment, corruption, lack of basic amenities, difficulty in doing business and millions of its citizens living in poverty. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and indeed, the black nations of the world with a population of about 15.9 million people in 1911 which grew to about 140 million people in 2006, based on the 2006 National Population Census but was estimated to be about 163 million people. [1].

Nigerians living in poverty at well over 110 million. In fact, the report specifies that six Nigerians fall into poverty every minute, which means in 2017 alone, about 3.2 million Nigerians were added to our already overcrowded poor population. Two major reasons account for Nigeria's deepening poverty misery and these are as follows:

1. Available resources are increasingly spread thinner per person. In 2014 for instance, the country's GDP growth rate was 6.3 per cent with a population hovering around 180 million. But after the recession, our GDP growth rate after the first quarter of 2018 stood at 1.9 per cent compared to our new estimated population figure of nearly 200 million people.
2. The present administration of President Muhammadu Buhari has focused on massive borrowing and infrastructure upgrades as a strategy to jumpstart the economy out of its recent recession, the amount actually committed to public amenities expansion is like a drop in the ocean and unable to support those struggling to stay afloat of the poverty level.

Objectives of the Study

Successive government in Nigeria since independence have put up one strategy or the other aimed at alleviating the sufferings of the people and put continuous smiles on the faces of the governed. The objectives of this write up are to examine:

- The meaning of poverty in the eyes of the rulers and the ruled
- The causes of poverty in Nigeria
- Some of the different poverty alleviation strategies of successive governments and see whether those policies have succeeded or failed.
- A way out for the nation which could serve as policy recommendation that would get Nigeria out of the present dungeon of failed poverty alleviation strategies and set the nation on the right path of sustainable economic development.

What is Poverty?

The meaning of poverty is very wide and elastic. It means different things to different people in different contexts and circumstances. According to the World Bank Report (1999), poverty is hunger, lack of shelter, being sick and not being able to go to school, not knowing how to read, not being able to speak properly, not having a job, fear for the future, losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water, powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom. [2]

According to [3] poverty can assume any of the following:

- The quality or condition of being poor
- The condition of having little or no wealth or material possession, destitution or want, in any degree.
- Deficiency, dearth, scarcity of the smallest amount of money.

- Deficiency in proper or desired quality of education.
- Poor condition of leanness or feebleness resulting from insufficient nourishment, etc.

The prevalence of mass poverty in Nigeria reflects the poor management and performance of the nation's economy. The level of economic performance of any country depends primarily on two factors. These are the level of resources available relative to the population and the level of productivity. Nigeria belongs to the group of poor countries with a high level of resources but low level of productivity and mismanagement of the abundant God-given resources. Substantial amount of revenue from these God-given resources are allegedly stolen and stock in foreign accounts. In relation to the population, the basic concept of poverty refers to a serious inadequacy of economic conditions, a situation of individual, group or regional lack or deprivation of what are considered basic necessities of life.

Types of Poverty

Two basic types of poverty are usually recognized: absolute poverty and relative poverty.

Absolute Poverty - It is a condition, characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs. They include food, drinking water, shelter, sanitation facilities, education, health, and information. The World Bank defines it as a condition limited by malnutrition, diseases, illiteracy, squalid surroundings, high infant mortality, and low life expectancy, which is beneath any reasonable definition of human decency. It depends both on the income of the populace and on the accessibility

to infract structural services. There is also an internationally accepted poverty line, which defines people in such condition. According to the World Bank, the poverty line has been about N900, the equivalent of \$1.25 for a day since 2005. However, as the prices and necessities may differ in various countries, there are as many national poverty lines as well.

Relative Poverty - This is a measure of income inequality or the part of population with earnings less than some fixed proportion of median income. It mostly depends on social context. This very term is used by the United Nations Development Program, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United Nations Children's Fund, and Canadian poverty researchers.

Relative poverty reflects the social inclusion cost and equality of opportunity in certain time and space. The major component in the computation of relative poverty measurement is the household expenditure. Expenditure refers to all goods and services for use of the household. It also includes all monetary transactions (e.g. Donations, Savings, Esusu contribution etc). As, earlier stated, there are 4 main measures of Poverty - Relative measure, Objective (Absolute) measure, Dollar per day and Subjective measure.

[2], analyses poverty from five dimensions of deprivation:

1. Personal and physical deprivation experienced as a result of health, nutritional, literacy and educational disability and lack of self confidence.
2. Economic deprivation drawn from the lack of access to property, income, assets, factors of production and finance.
3. Social deprivation as a result of denial from full participation in social, political and economic activities
4. Cultural deprivation in terms of lack of access to values, beliefs, knowledge, information and attitudes which deprives the people of control of their own destinies and;
5. Political deprivation in terms of lack of political voice to participate in decision making that affects their lives.

Poverty is highly visible in most African countries. The World Development Report (2002) estimates a large number of people who are struggling to survive on less than US \$370 a year - or a dollar a day. As at today, more than one billion people in the developing world continue to live in poverty. On the dollar-a-day measure, about 210 million people in sub-Saharan Africa are in poverty, and their numbers continue to grow. (World Bank, 1995)

Consequences of Poverty on people

The vicious cycles of poverty mentioned above mean that lifelong handicaps and troubles that are passed on from one generation to another. To name just a few of these hereditary plagues: no school or education, child labour to help the parents, lack of basic hygiene and transmission of diseases. Unemployment and very low incomes create an environment where

kids can not simply go to school. As for those who can actually go to school, they simply do not see how hard work can improve their life as they see their parents fail at the task every day. Other plagues associated with poverty are:

- Alcohol and substances abuse, from kids in Nigerian slums to adults, this is a very common self-destructing habit often taken as a way to cope

with huge amounts of stress and despair.

- Crippling accidents due to unsafe working environments (machinery in factories or agriculture) as well as other work hazards such as lead poisoning, pesticide poisoning, bites from wild animals due to lack of proper protection.
- Poor housing and living conditions which is a classic cause of diseases.
- Water and food-related diseases, simply because the poor can't always afford "safe" foods.

Effects of Poverty on the Society as a whole

In the end, poverty is a major cause of social tensions and threatens to divide a nation because of the issue of inequalities, in particular income inequality. This happens when wealth in a country is poorly distributed among its citizens. In other words, when a tiny minority of the population have all the money. The feature of a rich or developed country for example is the presence of a middle class, but recently we've seen even Western countries gradually losing their middle class, hence the increasing number of riots and clashes. In a society, poverty is a very dangerous factor that can destabilize and entire country.

Effects of poverty on Children

Powerless victims - Ever since the 1960s, the share of children affected by poverty has only got bigger and bigger. Children are those who have the least choice and ability to change what happens to them. There is not much children can do to help their families, nor should they have to. Until they can stand firmly on their two legs, usually by the age of 6, then they can be enrolled willy-nilly in child labour. Nearly all possible consequences of poverty have an impact on children'

lives. Poor infrastructures, unemployment, lack of basic services and income reflect on their lack of education, malnutrition, violence at home and outside, child labour, diseases of all kinds, transmitted by the family or through the environment.

Children antisocial behaviour - One of the effects of poverty on children's development is to lead them to build an antisocial behaviour that acts as a psychological protection against their hostile environment. Discrimination and social exclusion often push them to more aggressiveness and less self-control and nuance in reaction to stressful events. Having often

been taken advantage of in their early childhood, they rarely come to a constructive way to deal with conflicts. As they grow up, these behaviours are more and more entrenched in their personalities and often considered unrecoverable. This highlights the importance of taking action as early as possible to improve children's living conditions. Policymakers should understand that not just income but a child's social environment at large (parenting, school violence, housing, but also sanitation, uncontaminated food and water) play a big role in creating new effects of poverty.

Impact of Poverty on Health

Life expectancy is shorter - A universal and simple measure of poverty consists in looking at different populations' health and life expectancy. It is no surprise that anywhere on earth, poorer communities fare worse than richer ones. But people's health is affected not only by material poverty but also by social exclusion. No matter if poverty affects someone's mental or physical health, the end result is the same: on average the poor live shorter lives than the rich. This is all the more true of ethnic minorities in whichever country,

where they're often the first groups to suffer from discrimination and unfair treatments.

This implies that the impact of poverty is not exclusively physical but also very much psychological: it affects in many ways mental health and human behaviour.

Every form of poverty, every form of social exclusion - be it material or racial - has its impact on people's health. After all, philosophers and sociologists often agree that man is but a social animal. So, living without a society or a group you belong to can have a huge impact on your mental health. This has massive consequences for policymakers concerned not just about poverty but also about reinforcing social cohesion.

Overcoming differences - A nation-building effort should shift from nationalism to uniting a people around a society that represents and acts according to a common set of values. In particular, it should be a society that nurtures an environment that will enable all of its citizens to best use or develop new skills, to best express their potential and participate in the development of society.

Feminization of Poverty

Almost everywhere in the world, women are segregated, have very limited access to education (for political, religious or social reasons) and are sometimes forbidden to work or restricted to tedious ones. There are obvious (political & social) interests in keeping women in this state, and it's always recommended when fighting against poverty to start with empowering women in every possible way to solve a great deal of problems.

Women and poverty - In absolute terms, that is concerning most basic needs,

fewer women live in poverty than fifty years ago, in fact, there has been an increasing share of women in poverty globally. This trend is also known as the feminization of poverty. This is yet another of the clear-cut effects of poverty. The trend toward more single-parent families has only made things worse and women have become more and more vulnerable to their environment. They find themselves forced to feed the poverty cycle by living in poverty with their children. Being the cornerstone of the family, women can have a great impact not only on the household income, but also on the education of children (including sanitation), and avoiding early child deaths due to bad habits, sanitation or improper food or water.

Poverty and the Environment

There is no proof that poverty, especially in cities, has an impact on the environment. On the other hand, backward or not so developed technologies and an industry's energy efficiency, how much energy it needs to produce an amount of goods, will greatly affect the environment. On the whole, the middle- and upper-classes lifestyles are also greatly responsible for the depletion of natural resources and the production of (toxic) waste. Or at least lifestyles based on over-consumption are the true responsible, which is often disregarded in public debates (as humans it is kind of hard to resist to so much temptation). If there is any common association of poverty with bad environment, it is probably because of those pictures of children running around in waste dumps. In fact there is no link between any of the consequences of global poverty and the environment, quite the opposite. Those toxic places prove very harmful to the poor, who actually dwell among dirt. It

has become commonplace in newspapers to blame poverty as fuelling terrorism by creating a state of misery and frustration that pushes people to join terrorist organizations. While this doesn't seem a totally groundless accusation - it makes sense and feeds the riches' tormented conscience - more and more research shows that the effect of poverty on terrorism is not that straightforward. It's important to note that most of the time terrorists do come from poorer countries with high unemployment, and that terrorist organizations often provide much higher salaries than any other job, if any other job is available at all. In fact, a lot of different factors interact with the decision to become a terrorist. Personal and cultural ideals, values and principles are just as important as material and social gain (reputation & fame for fighting the imperialists) of entering terrorism.

A cocktail of education and poverty - It seems that very low levels of education and wealth do not drive people to join a terrorist movement. It may sound counter-intuitive, but if you think about it for a minute, the very poor and uneducated usually:

1. Do not know about the outside world or have extremely limited knowledge of the outside world. So how could they be angry at how the rich live when they do not even know how they live?
2. Illiterates - Given the extent of manipulation and ideological indoctrination, people usually need some educational basis to understand indoctrination. In the case of Islamism, one would need to know literary Arabic in order to understand the Qur'an and the very special "version" of it that they use. Literary Arabic is a very elaborate language, of great beauty and

poetry. Not something that everyone can grasp, even for a simplified or weirdly interpreted version of the Qur'an. The problem with most ancient languages is their hazy-misty style that, if you ignore the context and original way of thinking, makes anyone free of interpreting them the way they want.

3. Poverty of stability - So terrorism cannot be a direct or solid effect of poverty, and it usually implies a minimum of education. What then is the source of frustration and anger? Studies have showed that countries with weak governments, institutions and personal civil rights are a great environment to nurture the production of terrorists. In countries undergoing a profound transition (e.g. from authoritarian to democratic regime), this sort of political instability often comes along with a blurring of rules and laws. These periods of change come with a transformation of the social order, values, ways of doing things that can become very distressing and unsettling for the people. It is in such moments that the craziest rumours, cults and other conspiracy theories best spread around.
4. Rumours appear to reassure people in thinking that there is still an order of things (e.g. government conspiracy), and that all things are in fact under somebody's control... rather than just totally out of control. You could call this a poverty of stability. It's sort of an unforeseen effect of poverty on people's minds or mental resistance to change. Stabilizing and empowering political institutions is therefore a crucial aspect of fighting against the consequences of poverty.

Measuring Poverty

[2], asserted that the most frequently used criteria for measuring poverty are:

1. Head Count Poverty Index - The head count poverty index is given by the percentage of the population that live in the household with a consumption per capita less than the poverty line.
2. Poverty Gap Index - The poverty gap index reflects the depth of poverty by taking into account, how far the average poor person's income is from the poverty line.
3. Distributional Sensitive Measure - The distributional sensitive measure of squared poverty gap reflects the severity of poverty. [4]; [5]; [6] as cited in [7].
4. Human Development Index - Past studies by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) advocate the use of the Human Development Index (HDI) and Capability Poverty Measure (CPM). [8] HDI combines 3 components in the measurement of poverty - life expectancy at birth; educational attainments; and improvement in standard of living determined by per capita income. The first index measures poverty as it relates to human survival, i.e. vulnerability to death at a relatively early age. The second relates to knowledge acquisition - being excluded from the world of reading and communication. The third relates to a decent living standard in terms of overall economic empowerment.
5. CPM however, focuses on the average capabilities of the people by reflecting on the percentage of those who lack basic, essential human capabilities which, as an end in them which is needed to rise from a position of poverty to one of sustained human development. [9].
6. Subjective Poverty Measure - This approach is referred to as self assessment poverty measure. It is the opinion of members of households. The outcome here is not different from the other three measures of poverty already discussed.
7. Self Assessment - The self assessment poverty measure seeks to find out from the household on whether they are very poor, just poor, moderately poor, fairly rich and rich. The World Bank as cited in [10] has called special attention to the causes of mass poverty in sub-Saharan Africa, the most basic being lack of access to skills, facilities and opportunities. The reasons behind such lack of access relate to the patterns of social and economic inequality. In a situation of mass poverty such as we have in Nigeria, where poverty is the lot of the generality of the people rather than the misfortune of a few, the primary reason of poverty must be sought not in the circumstances of individuals but in the state of the nation and its management.

As observed by [11], the most developed countries in the world today include some countries very poor in physical resources while the poorest countries include some of the most richly endowed with physical resources like Nigeria. [12], asserts that some of the problems militating against the effort of poverty reduction in the third world nations include: lack of employment especially for the school leavers at all levels, slow economic growth, inflation, lack of social services, instability of exchange rate, political instability etc. The World Bank Report (1990) cited [13] had identified 4 other measures of poverty to include, increase in the income of the poor. These are:

1. Increasing the demand and therefore the price for those factors of production that the poor own.
2. Transferring physical asset such as land to the ownership of the poor

3. Providing social services such as education for the poor
4. Transfer of current income to the poor through cash or food subsidies. These measures can help in minimizing the incidence of poverty in Africa. [14]

million citizens were forced to live for the equivalence of about \$1.25 a day, meaning they stepped beyond the poverty line. The population of Nigerian living in poverty is given as:

- 1980: 17.1 million
- 1985: 34.7 million
- 1992: 39.2 million
- 1996: 67.1 million
- 2004: 68.7 million
- 2010: 112.47 million
- 2014: 187 million*
- 2016: 200 million*

Poverty Statistics in Nigeria

Despite measures taken, poverty statistics in Nigeria are constantly deteriorating. According to the UN report, in 2016, our country was ranked the 152nd in terms of living standards. In total, 188 countries were studied. The unemployment rate reached 42%. 80

Source: Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics, HNLSS 2010

*Estimated by extrapolation.

Year	1980	1985	1992	1996	2004	2010	2014	2016
Rate	27.0%	46.3%	42.7%	65.5%	54.4%	69.0%	70.4%*	72.8*

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, HNLSS 2010

*Estimated by extrapolation

Causes of Poverty in Nigeria

Nowadays, poverty is one of the significant global problems. People in many countries suffer from it, as it mostly concerns undeveloped or developing countries. In Nigeria, poverty is a real problem. It's very widespread and severe. As a result, people have lack of food, clothes, education and the other basic amenities. The most widespread causes of poverty in Nigeria include:

1. Unemployment - The cost of living keeps soaring higher while the standards of life go down. There may be various causes of unemployment in Nigeria. The most common one is the lack of education. However, even educated people often cannot find a job. The unemployment rate for the country

had reached 4.9% in 2007 and in 2015 it reached 7.5%. [15]

2. Corruption - This term denotes an abuse of the power for private purposes and it happens very often in Nigeria. Thus, the political system has been destabilized. The country's income, which is taken mostly from natural resource revenues, is then distributed among the political office holders and their families. All the rest are left in poverty. It's a common case, when political leaders just ignore the necessities and well-being of those, who have voted for them.
3. No diversification in the economy - The country's economy used to be based on the agricultural sector. However, revenue from the oil sector rose to 97% by 1984 in the nations GDP.[15] Since that time, it has become the major revenue earner (it has never fallen below 90%). Any other income sources have been

ignored by the authorities, which has made Nigeria very dependable on oil export. Thus, a great number amount of fellow Nigerians have become impoverished, as their products have become irrelevant. Moreover, Nigeria's oil revenues reduced after the world's oil price crash in 2014. It also made the external debt increased.

4. Inequality - The income's inequality among people from rural and urban areas is high in Nigeria. Those who live in the rural areas have their money only from agriculture, which isn't a thriving sector today. Besides, they cannot invest their money as many people from the cities do.
5. Laziness - Even if people want to live better, many of them aren't ready to work for it. It often happens that the family's budget is supported by one member, who works really hard. And when they die or become very ill, the family then become poor.
6. Education System - Education is necessary for development. Many of the poor ones are uneducated. Many Nigerian girls can't get educated as they are considered inferior gender.
7. Under-utilization of labour resources - Plenty of poor farmers aren't capable of farming on a scale that will match their labour resources. Besides, there is dire shortage of working capital. It limits the productiveness of farming in general.
8. Political instability - Social and political programs are not capable of fighting domestic and international unrest. Investments are being withdrawn, jobs are insecure, the citizens feel economic precipice.

Possible Solutions to Poverty in Nigeria

Although, various approaches have been tried to fight poverty, not much has been achieved as evidenced by the

continuous rising trends of poverty throughout the continent. For Nigeria to deal effectively with her poverty problems, it is crucial that:

1. Sustainable long-term solutions are devised to salvage the current trend. Fighting poverty is a daunting challenge that requires a multifaceted approach in line with the multi-dimensional nature of poverty. Nigeria should therefore borrow a leaf from what other countries are doing, particularly, the East Asia countries, which suffered from similar levels of poverty with many African countries in the 1960s and 1970s.
2. It is now clear that for poverty reduction, economic growth is a necessity but not a sufficient condition. For economic growth to be an effective strategy, it has to be accompanied by a deliberate provision of enabling infrastructure environment that can sustain economic development.
3. In addition, government must build an investment climate that facilitates the growth of the private sector and simultaneously empowers poor people to participate in that growth. Providing a good investment climate extends beyond good policies. It includes the right institutions, good governance, stability and qualitative infrastructure.
4. Poverty eradication would be a mirage in Nigeria and in the entire black Africa if there is no good governance. To have democracy is not only the answer but good leaders must implement people oriented programmes that would reduce the sufferings of the people and put a permanent smile on the faces of the governed.

Despite all the difficulties, there are other ways to reduce the poverty level

in Nigeria or at least to curb it. These possible solutions include:

Rural areas development - To improve the poverty situation in Nigeria, the rural population must not be further ignored in infrastructural development. They should be supplied with clean water, electricity, medical assistance and access to the information technologies.

Hunger removal - The application of technologies in local occupations such as agriculture may increase the produce output, reduce spoilage of goods and steady the prices of foodstuff in the cities. This will make rural populace more affordable for the urban poor. It would be also better to build good roads from cities to villages, thus, improving the financial status of the rural population.

Foreign trade - Pharmaceuticals, commodities, cement, food, and many other market sectors should be developed in Nigeria to enable trade with the other countries, especially, within Africa.

Family planning - As national wealth in Nigeria keeps declining, a baby may become not a boon, but a cause of suffering. A poor woman in this country may have up to seven children. Family planning reduces any complications, mothers, and child mortality. Special centres need to be built in order to help mothers in local areas.

Minimum wage increase - The workers can be motivated with the growing amount of salary. The more and better they work, the better they are paid. It will also increase the demand for goods and services, which will have a positive effect on the economy.

Programs/Policies instituted to alleviate poverty in Nigeria

Nigeria gained her political independence on October 1, 1960 from the British government. With political independence, various successive governments have taken different strategies aimed at alleviating poverty and thereby making Nigerians to be self-reliant economically. To reduce poverty various schools of thought advocates a number of measures [16]. The following strategies amongst others have been undertaken by successive Nigerian governments.

1. At independence, government first attempt at alleviating poverty was the Farm Settlement Centre. This attempt was to develop the food-sub sector for both the cash crop and the food crop. Few years later, the programme was short lived as it was described as a failure by the Gowon Administration that came in 1967.
2. The General Gowon administration later introduced the Agricultural Development Project (ADP) in 1973. The ADP was then jointly financed by the World Bank and the Federal and State governments. The programme was aimed at promoting integrated rural development.
3. The Olusegun Obasanjo administration of 1976 introduced the defunct Operation Feed the Nation (OFN). The major aim of the OFN programme was to raise the awareness of Nigerians towards self sufficiency in food production. With all the money pumped into OFN, the programme did not produce the expected appreciable positive result at increasing food production.
4. Again, the Obasanjo government promulgated a decree to ensure that land-tenure system was abolished in Nigeria and that all land belongs to the government. The policy was aimed at ensuring that people were not hindered in their attempt to farm. It was believed that with more food production, there would be

- better standard of living for the citizenry.
5. During the second republic (1979 - 1983), former President Shehu Shagari introduced the "Green Revolution". Though Nigerian forest had been green before the green revolution, the program again could not go far as there was no zeal and commitment by the operators of the program.
 6. Again, during the second republic, the government introduced "Austerity measures". It was a policy aimed at ensuring that people spend wisely. The austerity measure came in as a result of the extravagant spending of the civilian government of the second republic both at state and at the federal levels.
 7. The Ibrahim Babangida regime of 1986 introduced "the Structural Adjustment Programme" - SAP. It was a programme, which was aimed at making Nigeria industrially reliant. Though SAP in principle was a good programme, but the then government of the country was not committed to its faithful implementation.
 8. Another major step aimed at alleviating poverty in Nigeria is the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) by the Babangida Administration. The NDE's sole aim then was to reduce unemployment with greater emphasis on self-reliance and entrepreneurship. The program was very laudable but it was not faithfully implemented.
 9. The Directorate of foods, roads and rural infrastructure (DFRRI) was another laudable programme by the Babangida government (1985 - 1993) which was aimed at alleviating poverty. The main aim of DFRRI was to open-up the rural areas, construct feeder roads and bridges, provide water supply etc. Again, the officials in charge of DFRRI became corrupt and the program lost focus.
 10. The Peoples Bank was another laudable program by the Babangida Administration, which was aimed at giving small loans to small and medium scale enterprises. As laudable as the programme was, it suffered the same fate as other laudable poverty alleviation programmes because of the "Nigerian factor" of corruption.
 11. The Better Life for rural women was initiated by the wife of former President Ibrahim Babangida. The program was aimed at raising the standard of living of rural women. Though the program was good, it was hijacked by urban elite women. Nigeria then believed that the faces they were seeing on Better Life programs were not that of rural women but that of urban elite and affluent women.
 12. It is on record that government created the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) in 1997, which was meant to be giving loans to Nigerians. Again, officials in charge of this programme turned it to a family project with nepotism, being the order of the day.
 13. The Olusegun Obasanjo administration (on his second coming, as a democratically elected President) set up Nigerian Economic Policy in 1999-2003. The program was to enable Nigerians to be better placed towards articulating ways of using its subsequent annual budget to realize the developmental goals stated in their policy statement.
 14. The Obasanjo administration also put up a number of measures aimed at alleviating the suffering of Nigerian masses. Such policies include: adoption of measures to stimulate production and broaden the supply base of the Nigerian economy, the Government has also

reformed the tariff policies on a number of times with the aim of promoting industrial diversification and economic sustenance and the deregulation of the nation's economy, which was aimed at returning many government businesses to private hands in order to promote efficiency.

15. The recent debt reduction/cancellation crusade is another bold step aimed at alleviating poverty in Nigeria. With debt reduction, managing the funds which had hitherto been used to service debts could now be judiciously spent internally to improve the living standard of Nigerians.

- living standard of the people.

16. The current administration of President Muhammadu Buhari which started in May 2015 has also put up a number of measures aimed at alleviating the suffering of Nigerian masses. Some of such programs include:

- The school feeding program
- Support of youth organizations - YES O Program
- GEEP - Government Empowerment and Entrepreneurship Programs
- Small Businesses Empowerment programs
- N-Power - It is believed that with efficiency, there will be better and more production of goods and services which will improve the

CONCLUSION

There is still so much hunger, unemployment, poor power supply and insecurity linked to insurgency, herdsmen's attacks and criminal banditry in Nigeria. A large number of people who operate in the agricultural sector have been displaced and the law-enforcement agents appear unable to cope. India, which is more than three times the size of Nigeria by land mass, worked very hard to expand its public facilities and utilities which were in decrepit conditions as recently as the mid-1990s. Buhari's administration, having recently launched the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan, ERGP (2018 - 2020), must work very hard to meet its main target of taking our economic growth back to levels that can sustain our rapidly-exploding population. However, without decisively addressing our insecurity problems - the killings and displacement of people - the ERGP is bound to fail. Efforts to increase power supply, build new highways while reconstructing damaged old ones and setting up modern standard gauge rail

networks, must be pursued with vigour. We must also rededicate ourselves to meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Plan, SDP, by 2030 to match human development with capital upgrades.

Issues like hunger, illness and thirst are both causes and effects of poverty. Not having access to water means that you are poor, and being poor also means that you may not be able to afford water or food either. In other words, poor health, lack of water or housing, child abuse or violence fuel a cycle of poverty in which so many ends up trapped for life. The causes and effects of poverty are often interrelated in such a way that one problem hardly ever occurs alone. Bad sanitation, for example, makes it easier to spread around old and new diseases, and hunger and lack of water make people more vulnerable to them. Impoverished communities often suffer from discrimination and end up being wrapped up in cycles of poverty. We must inspire fellow African countries,

which occupy the lower rungs of the world poverty ladder, to rise and join

the rest of the civilized world.

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