

Policy Root of Poverty Crisis in Nigeria: Targeting Year 2030 with Social Protection Intervention

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Abstract: Recognition of poverty and its damaging consequences on the socio-economic lives of Nigerians is not new. In response, all successive government in the country has severally introduced policy with component programmes aimed at curbing poverty. These programmes include but not limited to the National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAPPP), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Family Support Programme (FSP), Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), National Poverty Eradication Programme, The National Economic Empowerment and the Development Strategy (NEEDS). In spite of these, poverty in Nigeria is not only wide spread but severe. The increasing incidence of poverty in Nigeria suggests a paradox when viewed against the various intervention programmes and efforts of government at it. The study identified the crises (factors) that influenced performance failure of the several poverty programmes. These include corruption, ineffective targeting of the poor, gross mismanagement and lack of financial discipline; poor and inconsistent funding; and regime specificity of poverty reduction programmes, among others. In order to guard against past policy failures, the study recommends the adoption of social protection strategies with emphasis on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, identified by the World Bank, that target the elimination of extreme poverty by 2030.

Key Words: Poverty policy, Poverty crisis, Sustainable development, Social protection

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I. INTRODUCTION

The 2016 World Development Indicators (WDI) published by the World Bank Group (WBG, 2016) presents a comparative data of country by country poverty rating. The rating which covers 1990 to 2012 showed that only 12 per cent of the world's population lived below the international poverty line of \$1.90 a day as at 2012 as against 37 percent in 1990. This suggests a significant decline in poverty globally. However, the report painted a mix picture when different economic blocks and continents are compared. While the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) programme was credited for performance success and given credit for the early decline of poverty in all regions of the world, extreme poverty rate in Sub-Saharan Africa did not fall below its 1990 level until 2002. The MDG ended in 2015 with a successor called the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). It is saddled with the aim of eliminating extreme poverty in all its ramifications by 2030.

While China and India are celebrating the successes of MDGs in curbing poverty in their countries, East Asia recorded a reduction in extreme poverty rate from 61 per cent in 1990 to 7 per cent in 2012. Similarly, extreme poverty rate in South Asian region fell from 51 per cent in 1990 to 19 per cent in 2012. Shortly before the release of WDI by the WBG (2016), the World Bank (2014) had published economic report with focus on Nigeria. The report observed that the number of Nigerians living in poverty was not decreasing, especially between 2010/2011 and 2012/2013 (World Bank Report, 2014, p. 18). This is a confirmation that millions of Nigerians still live in poverty; and in fact poverty rate has not been significantly reduced in Nigeria in spite of the acclaimed successful implementation of the MDGs programmes in the country. It is also suggestive that the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) put in place to accomplish poverty reduction, create wealth, and generate employment, among other goals, may have ended with performance failure. In the opinion of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI, 2012), the poverty rate in Nigeria has indeed doubled in the past 20 years.

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has been consistent in the periodic analysis of Nigeria's poverty profile as well as the World Bank. The recent poverty data released by the NBS revealed that the proportion of people living in absolute poverty in Nigeria has not shown any remarkable reduction since 1980. From a recorded 17.1 million poor people in 1980, the number increased to 112.49 million in 2010 (NBS, 2012). The 2014 World Bank Report puts the official poverty rate at 46 per cent (adult equivalent approach) or 62 per

cent in strictly per capita terms, given the updated international poverty line of \$1.90 a day per person. This consistent rise in the poverty profile of Nigeria is at odds with the general international trend of poverty reduction shown in Asia, and even India (World Bank, 2014). This is particularly so when the NBS announced a re-based economy that showed that Nigeria had a gross national product of US\$ 509 billion in 2013, making it the largest economy in Africa and the 26th largest economy in the world.

The consequences of poverty are well known; and have been documented by several scholars. Apart from material deprivation, the hardships and diminished life prospects that come with being poor are triggers of anger, relative deprivation and frustration (Ikoh, Charles & Charles, 2008) which can result in deviant behaviour and outright criminality (Ukpong & Ikoh, 2010). Childhood poverty often means growing up without the advantages of a stable home, inability to attend school, poor access to food and shelter. Adults in poverty are often without adequate skills and education, leading to joblessness and limited income. The lack of income suggests inability to access healthcare and other basic needs. In the urban areas, it could result in homelessness or staying in rundown houses and shanties, since house rent may not be affordable. As early as 1999, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN, 1999) had warned that Nigerians living in poverty may not be able to cater adequately for their basic needs of food, clothing and shelter; and would not be able to meet social and economic obligations, as they lack gainful employment, skills, assets and self-esteem; access to social and economic infrastructure such as education, health, portable water, and sanitation; and consequently, would have limited chance of advancing their welfare and that of their dependents. In the face of present economic recession, macroeconomic shocks are likely to exacerbate the present poverty level. Many young men and women who have graduated from school are already roaming the streets without jobs; many others who got jobs have been laid off. An emerging possibly clearer picture of consequences of poverty and living standards in Nigeria are in the area of insecurity.

Given the socio-economic consequences of poverty and the fact that the proportion of Nigerian living in poverty is increasing every year, devising efficient and effective intervention policy that can curb the rising rate of poverty in the country becomes necessary. It is evident that the facets of poverty in Nigeria are many, complex and dynamic in nature, and to some extent self-reproducing. They seem to have defied (as recently seen in the WBG and MDGs reports) domestic and international efforts. In this context, some thinking along the line of Nigeria's "Vision 20:2020" with components of social security strategy, need to be encouraged. This is the purpose of this chapter. There is emerging international paradigm shift in the fight against poverty that is re-echoing the call for social protection intervention- how to secure Nigerians against want, poverty, and destitution (Next Generation Nigeria, 2010). It is hoped that the syntheses in ideas expressed here would not only help in expanding the frontiers in Nigeria's poverty discourse, but would also contribute to re-strategizing techniques in the fight against poverty in Nigeria. In order to achieve this objective, the chapter attempts to answer two related questions: Why have the several poverty policies and programmes introduced by Nigerian government failed to generate poverty reduction in the country? What can be done to sustainably reduce poverty in Nigeria?

The chapter is arranged in themes beginning with the introduction. In the next theme, we provide a background of poverty profile in the country, followed with synopsis of the different policies and programmes that have been implemented to curb poverty in Nigeria. Thereafter we examined the causes of poverty policy failures. Next, we present a roadmap with components of social protection, which can possibly help to reverse the growing poverty trend in the country if implemented.

Poverty in Nigeria

Recognition of poverty and its damaging consequences on the socio-economic lives of Nigerians is not new. At independence in 1960, the then Federal Office of Statistics (FOS, 1996) had indicated that 15 per cent of Nigerians were poor. By 1980 poverty incidence had grown to 28 per cent of the population, and reached 46 per cent by 1985. Its marginal decline to 43 per cent in 1992 did not last, as the 1996 estimate revealed that 66 per cent of Nigerians were poor (World Bank, 2002). Contemporary record still show no remarkable progress among Nigerians living in poverty today. The 2010 Nigerian poverty profile illustrated much of this information (Table 1 and Fig. 1). Poverty incidence had increased from 65.6 per cent in 1996 to 69.0 per cent in 2010. A further classification of the population into the moderately and extremely poor shows that the extremely poor had increased from 29.3 per cent in 1996 to 38.6 per cent in 2010. Hidden from the data are the national income inequalities which worsen from 0.43 to 0.45 between 2004 and 2010, thus widening the gap between the rich and the poor; with rural and urban figure standing at 2.2 per cent and 4.2 per cent respectively.

Table 1: Poverty headcount from 1980 – 2010

Year	Poverty incidence (%)	Estimated Population (Million)	Population in poverty (Million)
1980	27.2	65	17.1
1985	46.3	75	34.7

1992	42.7	91.5	39.2
1996	65.6	102.3	67.1
2004	54.4	126.3	68.1
2010	69.0	163	112.47

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2012, p. 11

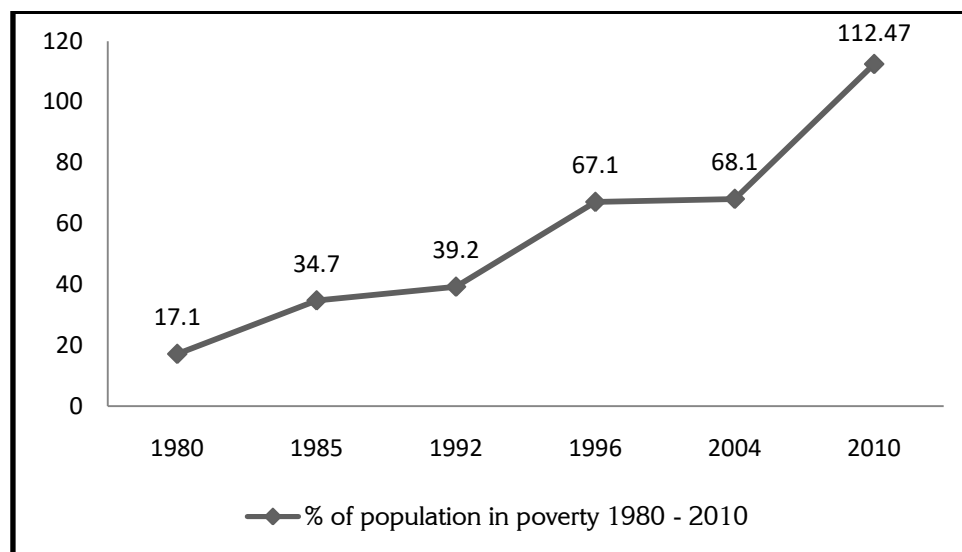


Fig. 1: Percentage of Nigerian population in poverty (1980 – 2010)

The 2014 statistics provided by the World Bank has not shown any improvement in recent poverty measure and analysis. New barriers to poverty reduction are evolving to complement existing ones. The number of poor is conservatively put at 70 per cent, with the majority living in the rural areas, and with a population of about 189, 964,528 growing at 3 per cent(www.worldometers.info/world-populate...), the number of poor is indeed large. Poverty is found in all the 36 States of the federation as well as Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory. The World Bank (2014) report on the General Household Survey (GHS) and Harmonized Nigeria Living Standards Survey (HNLSS) provided an insight into the poverty level and living standard of Nigerians. As shown in Table 2 below, the report suggests proliferation of poverty in both the Northern and Southern part of the country, but while the incidence is less in the South, it tended to be severe in the North, especially in the North East and North West. The three Southern geo-political zones togetherwith the North Central region experienced declines in estimated poverty rates between 2010 and 2013, whereas poverty increased in the North East and remained largely unchanged in the North West. The contrast in absolute levels of poverty in the different region is also striking; with the South West experiencing the lowest poverty rate (16%) in 2012-2013, while an estimated 50.2 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line in the North East. The North West (45.9%) and North East (52%) account for the majority of poor Nigerians. When the North Central is considered, it would appear that about 66 per cent of the poor reside in the Northern part of the country. In recent time militancy and cattle herders-farmer crises in the South and North central geo-political zone as well as Boko Haram insurgency in the North East, which have resulted in human displacement, may likely exacerbate the incidence of poverty in Nigeria.

In Table 2 below a remarkable contrast between urban and rural areas in poverty estimates is shown. The urban area in Nigeria on aggregate experienced both a significantly lower poverty rate and measurable progress in poverty reduction, when compared to the rural area. In this context the results seem to suggest that urbanization and urban growth can be a primary driver of poverty reduction in Nigeria. If this is so, the report is also suggestive that the impact of poverty policy as shown in the reduction of poverty among urban dwellers is yet to trickle down to the rural dwellers. The concern, however, remains on food security. If poverty is so wide and severe in the rural area, it is suggestive that the agriculture which is the mainstay of rural economy is seriously affected. In all, a large number of Nigerians still cluster around the poverty line, which implies a high degree of vulnerability for a large part of the population.

Table 2: Poverty rates per capita from GHS Panel data (% of population)

	Poverty Head Count		Diff	Poverty gap			Poverty Severity		Poverty Headcount
	GHS 2010 - 2011	GHS 2012 – 2013		GHS 2010 - 2011	GHS 2012 – 2013	–	GHS 2010 - 2011	GHS 2012 – 2013	
National	35.2	33.1	-2.1	9.2	9.6		3.7	3.9	62.6
Rural	46.3	44.9	-1.4	12.9	13.1		5.2	5.3	69.1
Urban	15.8	12.6	-3.2	2.8	3.6		1.0	1.3	51.2
North Central	33.4	31.1	-2.3	8.9	8.9		4.0	3.5	65.8
North East	47.1	50.2	3.1	15.9	13.0		6.9	5.2	75.4
North West	46.9	45.9	-1.0	12.4	12.4		4.6	4.8	74.2
South East	31.7	28.8	-2.9	8.1	10.3		3.2	4.7	54.9
South South	27.7	24.4	-3.3	6.7	7.7		2.7	3.2	53.3
South West	21.2	16.0	-5.2	3.6	5.4		1.3	2.0	47.9

Source: World Bank (2014) Nigeria economic report, p. 17.

The structure and operation of poverty policy in Nigeria: some synopsis

The increasing incidence of poverty in Nigeriasuggests a paradox when viewed against the various intervention programmes and efforts of government at curbing poverty in the country.In the argument of the World Bank (1996, cited in Obadan, 1997, p. 21), it becomes a paradox “when compared to the country’s immense wealth”. Interestingly, Nigeria has been severally described as a rich country inhabited by poor people. According to the World Bank (2014) report, Nigeria has one of the world's highest economic growth rates, averaging 7.4 per cent; with plenty of natural resources, beside oil. This massive wealth and a huge population that supposed to support a robust commerce to create and redistribute wealth among the citizens, is rather experiencing entrenched poverty and growing inequality.

In response to the growing incidence of poverty, all successive government has severally introduced policy with component programmes aimed at curbing poverty. A synopsis of some of these policies and programmes are given below.

1. *The National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAPPP) and the Nigerian Agricultural and Co-operative Bank (NACB):* These programmes were introduced in 1972 to accelerate food production in the country. Unfortunately the real small scale farmers that were initial target of the policy were not reached; and its aim of alleviating poverty became defeated. A 2004 evaluative report observed that NAFPP was a colossal waste of resources (The Presidency, 2001).

2. *Operation Feed the Nation (OFN):* This programme was initiated in 1976. OFN incorporated a teaching component aimed at enlightening rural farmers about crop types and the use of fertilizer. The aim of the programmes was essentially to increase food production and make food affordable and accessible to Nigerians. University graduates were encouraged to go into farming. The Shehu Shagari government that took over the programmesin 1979 complimented it with the Green Revolution Programme (GRP) and extended the aim of the programme to include reduction in food importation and increase in local food production above subsistence farming. While the programmessucceeded in creating awareness, it was short-lived as the military government that overthrew Shehu Shagari’s government could not continue with the programmes.

3. *Go back to land.* This policy was initiated by the General Ibrahim Babangida military regime (1985 – 1993) as a comprehensive strategy on the nation’s war against povertyalleviation in 1986. It had three complementary programmes, viz: Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), People Bank, and the National Directorate of Employment (NDE). The argument then was that since poverty was predominantly in the rural area, and majority of Nigerians were farmers, it would be better to design programmes that would target rural dwellers. While DFRRI targeted the rural dwellers with the creation and rehabilitation of feeder roads, rural water supply and rural electrification, the Peoples bank sought to provide loans to prospective entrepreneurs on soft terms without stringent requirements of collaterals. It also opened and regulated activities of community banks as sources of cheap funds for rural dwellers.

Beyond the opening of rural roads for the purpose of facilitating the evacuation of food products to the urban market, DFRRI promoted rural employment through the provision of rural infrastructure, such as electricity. It was easy to set up services like welding workshop, barbing saloon, viewing centers, etc, in the rural areas. It encouraged urban-rural migration (re-turn migration)especially for youth who were roaming the urban streets looking for non-existing jobs. For those who could not return to land, the NDE programmeswhich had four-pronged approach, including Vocational Acquisition Training (VAT), Entrepreneurial Business Training (EBT), Training for Rural Employment (TRE), and Training for Labour-Based Works (TLBW) provided skill training for selective few. The extent to which NDE succeeded in achieving it aim has remained a

debated among scholarly commentary (Obadan, 1996; Arogundade, Adebisi, & Ogunro, 2011). However, many youth across gender divide had received vocational skills training in all the 36 states of the federation and Abuja FCT; and it provided a major cushioning effect on the global economic recession that took Nigeria unaware during the 1980s (Igbuzor, 2005).

4. *Family Support Programme (FSP)*: The programme was initiated by the wife of the then military President, General Ibrahim Babangida with rural women in mind. Health care and child welfare constituted the specific objectives. For the first time in the war against poverty a gender element was introduced into the programme, acting on the assumption that women needed special treatment in the light of their immense contributions to the national economy, both as small-scale entrepreneurs and home keepers.

4. *Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP)*: After the exit of General Babangida from office the wife of the new military head of State, General Sani Abacha, also introduced her own poverty alleviation programme in the name of FEAP. The programme targeted rural dweller with the sole aim of giving credit facilities to support the establishment of cottage industries. Evaluative report revealed that FEAP existed for about two years (1998 – 2000) during which it received funding to the tune of N7 billion out of which about N3.3 billion was disbursed as loans to about 21,000 cooperative societies nationwide. The projects that received assistance included poultry production, garri-making, soap making and animal husbandry (National Poverty Eradication Council, 2000).

5. *National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)*: This programme was initiated in 1999 by President Obasanjo administration. It provided a central coordination point for all anti-poverty efforts from the local government level to the national level. The policy aim of the programme was to eradicate poverty other than poverty alleviation as undertaken by all other programmes. Four schemes were initiated, each with target aims. The schemes included Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS), Social Welfare Services Scheme (SOWESS), and Natural Resource Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS).

In order to eradicate absolute poverty, NAPEP had to establish structures in all the States of the federation. It created a Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP) and Mandatory Attachment Programme (MAP) for youths. Through the establishment of a data bank, all unemployed youths in the 36 states of the federation and the Federal Capital territory (FCT) were registered. The data bank provided the resource base for identifying and reaching unemployed people with poverty intervention package. Unlike other programmes, NAPEP existed as a coordination facility that ensures that the core poverty eradication Ministries were effective.

6. *The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS)*: The NEEDS vision drew inspiration from the Nigerian Constitution, and the 2001 Kuru Declaration, as well as the core values of Vision 2010, encapsulated in the economic strategy prepared by the Abacha era. Unlike other intervention programmes, NEEDS benefited from a widespread consultation and participation throughout Nigeria. The aim of NEEDS was to respond effectively to existing problems including, poverty, unemployment, promote economic growth and value re-orientation (National Planning Commission 2004).

In order to reduce poverty, NEEDS was proposed to act on several fronts; and decentralized operation centers to states (SEEDS) and local government areas (LEEDS). Farmers were to benefit from improved irrigation, machinery, and crop varieties that would help to boost agricultural productivity, since more than half of Nigeria's poor people are engaged in agriculture. Small and medium-size enterprises were to help create jobs. The States and Local Government components were to implement an integrated rural development programme to stem the flow of migration from rural to urban areas. The programme was designed to have a periodic (quarterly) review of performance, as well as a monitoring team. It is not certain how many of the expected evaluation report from the team were rendered, but independent performance evaluation report of NEEDS consistently painted performance failure with respect to poverty reduction (Ingwe, 2009, Aliyu, 2002).

The crisis of Nigeria Poverty Policy

The synopsis of poverty policies provided in the foregoing paragraphs suggests that the problem of poverty in Nigeria has for a long time been a cause for concern to the government and people of Nigeria. For instance, the second and fourth national development plans contain both direct and indirect allusions to, as well as objectives of, policies and programmes aimed at minimizing the causes of poverty (Obi, 2007). Several poverty policy and programme have been initiated and implemented in Nigeria depending on who comes to power since 1960. The programmes' aims differ with either emphasis on poverty alleviation, poverty reduction or poverty eradication. Each programme attracted a colossal amount of resources and fanfare, including promises to end/or curb poverty. It is not certain how many Nigerians have been helped out of the trap of poverty, as evaluative reports on the performance of each of the programmes lack a longitudinal and comparative approach. However, Ajakaiye (2003, cited in Jega (2003, p.6) pointed out some noticeable constraints that bedeviled the performances of the programme to include:

Policy inconsistency and poor governance; ineffective targeting of the poor (leading to leakage of benefits to unintended beneficiaries); Unwieldy scope of the programmes resulting in resources being thinly spread among projects; Overlapping of functions which ultimately led to institutional rivalry and conflicts; Lack of complementarities from beneficiaries; Uncoordinated sectoral policy initiatives; Lack of involvement of social partners and other stakeholders in planning, implementation and evaluation; and Poor human capital development and inadequate funding.

Another report from the Presidential Panel on Streamlining and Rationalization of Poverty Alleviation Institutions and Agencies (PPSRPAIA, 1999, p.10) listed some reasons it considered thwarted the aims of the several government programmes initiated to fight poverty in the country. The reasons included:

Gross mismanagement and lack of financial discipline; Poor and inconsistent funding; Policy inconsistencies occasioned by frequent changes in Government and absence of in-built sustainability mechanism; and absence of a coordinating body necessary for effective implementation, co-ordination, planning, monitoring and evaluation of achievements and constraints.

The fight against poverty did not only suffer from over-politicization, but also poor implementation, duplication of efforts by the several agencies, and lack of continuity of programmes by the several governments (military and civilian) that came to power. As Obadan (1996, p. 12) brilliantly remarked, “programmes designed to fight poverty in Nigeria are bound to end like all other programmes because of inherent conception error”. The conception and implementation of most of the poverty alleviation programmes were not influenced by research. Where some had research background, they were not usually based entirely on the result of the said research efforts but were whittled down to the extent that the main thrust of the research would have been lost before its implementation (Fajingbesi & Ugah, 2001). Politicians that conceive them always have selfish interest at the root of it (with respect to those that would administer them and the target audience). What they stand to benefit from the programme therefore influence their implementation; and at the end of it all the political interference had obscured transparency in the selection of programmes beneficiaries, and hence the sustainability of the programmes (Thomas & Canagarajah, 2002).

As Poverty reduction programmes became more ‘regime specific’ without continuity with those initiated by previous governments, many of the poverty reduction programmes became very vague in scope. For instance programmes initiated by First Ladies were made not to last longer than their husbands’ tenure. While their tenure lasts, the programmes received donations both in cash and kind that were used to execute the programme. In this context the design of poverty programmes were always weak, and ad-hoc in nature right from their conception. Their unsustainable nature could therefore be predicted at conception, and beneficiaries were often very few selected privileged political followers instead of the target poor. Failure to insulate the poverty reduction programmes from nepotism, unnecessary politicization and uncoordinated management resulted in harvest of failures experienced in the several poverty policy of government. For instance, analysis of FEAP revealed that the functions of the programme were already being performed by other institutions; and that other stakeholders in the programme did not devote the required time and resources to its success.

Additionally is the problem of corruption. Many programme managers failed to allow the programme benefit to reach the real poor. Loan meant for rural farmers were instead given to urban portfolio farmers, because of pecuniary benefit (FOS, 1999). In Obadan (1999, p. 14) argument, “no matter how well intentioned any poverty reduction programme maybe in Nigeria, the target beneficiaries will continue to lose until corruption is reduced to its barest minimum”.

In his analysis of crisis that belittle NAPEP’s achievement, Aliyu (2002, p.59) cited weak response and “lack of commitment of the Federal Ministries to the roles of members of the State Coordination Committees as well as weak capacities of the State and LGA offices” of the Ministries in generating and processing the required data in their field operations. “The facilities and logistical set out to support NAPEP’s effective monitoring of all poverty related operations in the LGAs were either lacking or not functional”. Adequate arrangement was not made for the maintenance and sustenance of the facilities provided, and in many LGAs, the decentralization of NAPEP left insufficient resources to adequately fulfill the new responsibilities for service delivery at the local level. It resembles at some point downloading exercise without adequate funding to support it (Bello & Roslan, 2010).

Prior to 1970, agriculture was regarded as the main stay of the Nigeria economy. It provided employment for about 70 percent of the citizen. In this regard nearly all the poverty alleviation and or reduction policy and programmes targeted the agriculture and the small scale farmers. It was hoped that providing incentives including seedling, fertilizer, education and soft loans to the farmers would put the farmers to work. Unfortunately, beside political consideration, all the policies were actually top-down in nature without input from the rural farmers and or farmers group who were meant to benefit from the programmes. The policies therefore failed to take cognizance of micro-level dynamics. The real small scale farmers could therefore not benefit from the programmes; and the implications of this are seen in the worsening food security situation and

the large number of rural people still living in poverty. The failure of the programmes has reinforced the causes of poverty and even further impoverishing the people.

Predicting the future of poverty in Nigeria

Whether measured in absolute or relative terms, poverty is a household name in Nigeria. The difference between rural and urban poverty may be in intensity, but they share similar characteristics. The current recession in the country, and wide spread corruption have combined to make access to basic means of livelihood for the ordinary citizens difficult. In the face of high rate of unemployment and illiteracy, the rate of poverty in Nigeria is among the highest in the world (ODI, 2012). Nigerians are not only vulnerable to income poverty but also highly vulnerable to a wide variety of other economic and social factors (UNCP, 2010). Many more Nigerians are falling into the poverty region instead of escaping; and this suggests an aggravating impact on the children and well-being of family members. In the analysis of the Hamilton Project (2014), for every person classified as poor, many more hover just above the threshold. Given these observations, it is arguable that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as it relates to poverty reduction in Nigeria can best be regarded as window dressing.

The MDGs ended in 2015 with a celebration of remarkable success in poverty reduction in many regions of the world except sub-Saharan Africa including Nigeria. The new programmes-Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been launched with the aim of curbing extreme poverty by year 2030. The programme has 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 associated targets build on the 8 goals and 18 targets of the Millennium Development Goals. Countries are encouraged to adopt the SDGs in changing their national poverty policy in order to end poverty and hunger and ensure that all citizens can fulfill their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment. It is also hoped that such sustainable approach will ensure that all people enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that progress would take place in harmony with nature “to foster peaceful, just, and inclusive societies free from fear and violence” (WBG, 2016, p.1).

The WBG recognizes the SDGs as new thinking and paradigm shifts that have severally been mooted in poverty discourse. It is not only a result of “bottom-up” input as against “top-down” government-dominated models, but also recognition that poverty is a complex, multifaceted problem that can be overcome only through a comprehensive set of innovative policies and effective reforms. There may be no silver bullet policy lever to combat poverty, but sustainable poverty reduction should be anchored on policies that promote efficient realization of basic human needs: food, health, shelter, job creation, etc. In this context the provision of safety net for the most vulnerable groups in the society e.g. old age, disabled and chronically poor rural dwellers can curb poverty sustainably (ODI, 2012). This argument influences the emergence of Social Protection Strategies.

Social Security Protection

Many poverty policies and programmes have been experimented in Nigeria since 1960. The evaluation of the programmes revealed a diverse network of providers tied around politicians, government agencies and its bureaucracies. Very little success in terms of poverty reduction has been harvested from these programmes. The SDGs aim at meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of the future generation. The target on poverty, gender inequality, etc, are encapsulated in social protection. There is need therefore for Nigeria to adopt a social protection strategy in line with SDGs in the fight against poverty.

Social protection is commonly conceptualized as a set of interventions which aim to address poverty with appropriate schemes that target the poor and most vulnerable in the society. There appear to be no single right model as each country determines what best suits their social and cultural values, their history, institutions and their level of economic development. However, the importance of social security protection in the fight against poverty has been severally emphasized (Thomas & Jorge, 1999; Nwabueze, 1989). For instance the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2001, p.3) observed that:

Social security, if properly managed, enhances productivity by providing health care, income security and social services. In conjunction with a growing economy and active labour market policies, it is an instrument for sustainable social and economic development. It facilitates structural and technological changes which require an adaptable and mobile labour force. It is noted that while social security is a cost for enterprises, it is also an investment in, or support for, people.

The World Bank Group incorporates social protection programme among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals that target the elimination of extreme poverty by 2030. This is specifically stated in SDGs 1 (zero hunger), 3 (good health and well-being) 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality), 8 (productive employment and economic growth), and 10 (reduced inequality). The goals target among others, cash transfers, school feeding, and food assistance, social insurance and labor market programmes, as well as old-age pensions, disability pensions, unemployment insurance, skills training, and wage subsidies.

While SDG 1 seeks to reducing poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions of poverty, SDG 2 aims to supporting food security and sustainable agriculture by raising agricultural productivity of poor households, and thus improves nutrition. The SDG 3 targets a range of health impact including reducing maternal mortality, providing universal access to sexual and reproductive health care, and reduces deaths and adverse consequences of non-communicable diseases and injuries. In order to attain quality education, SDG 4 places emphasis on attending and completing school, as well as ensuring the quality of education. Despite decades of advocacy on gender equality, the review of MDGs performance revealed that critical gaps between men and women still persist. Half of women were found to be economically active compared to over three-quarters of men. In order to close this with gap, SDG 5 advises on the initiation of programmes that will identify obstacles to gender and thus set to empowering women's economic opportunities, by increasing access to work and income-earning opportunities. It also emphasized on ending violence against women and girls, and eliminating child's early, and forced marriage.

Sustainable Development Goal 8 recognized that jobs are the bedrock of both economic and social development. It therefore suggested the creation of some 600 million new jobs by 2030, in order to empower young people, and keep pace with rising population. The targets of Sustainable Development Goal 10 focus on reducing inequality in a variety of contexts, including income inequality within a country and inequality by gender, age, disability, race, class, ethnicity, religion, and opportunity. It also tackles inequality among countries in terms of voice, migration, and international aid. In this context the SDG 10 echoes the World Bank's goal of promoting shared prosperity; it may not set a specific target for each country but aims to foster income growth among the poorest 40 percent in every country. In order to eliminate poverty, SDG 16 recognizes the importance of peace, justice and strong institutions in the fight against poverty. It thus seeks to promote an inclusive society, as well as access to justice. "Strong justice and rule of law systems provide mechanisms for resolving land and natural resource disputes, keeping governments accountable to citizens, and giving businesses the confidence to enter into and enforce contracts" (WBG, 2016, p. 36).

Social protection strategy applies both economic and a social analyses in the development of poverty target interventions. Nigeria's Vision:2020 recognizes this as much, and has incorporated the social protection strategies into the programme. As the SDGs demonstrated, a nexus exist between poverty, inequality, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, productive employment and economic growth. In other word, a reduction in poverty can result in a significant payoff in the realization of SDGs. For instance, empirical findings have shown that increased and qualitative schooling has positive and significant impact on better living standards. In this context Social Protection focuses not only on quantitative expansion of school system but also expansion and broadening of access to skillful education that can make self-employment possible (Ali, Germano, & Gesami, 2002).

In order to build on the template provided by WDG (2016), and effectively and efficiently implement strategies toward realizing Vision:2020 and beyond as encapsulated in the Sustainable Development Goals, Nigerian needs to implement appropriate social protection policies and programmes. This work draws its analysis of Social Protection strategies and goals from the work of Melissa and Benjamin (2014) on the Hamilton project. The goals are specifically four, but with targets that can ensure effective poverty reduction if efficiently implemented in Nigeria. A breakdown of these goals and targets are presented below:

Goal 1: Promoting Early Childhood Development

The 2016 report of the Children Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF, 2016) revealed that 17.3 million children world-wide are severely wasted; and that 1 in 10 of these children is in Nigeria. Lack of adequate statistics may not allow us to know the actual number of children in Nigeria, and the age range too, but children in Nigeria come from diverse background and family set up. In this respect some children and parents in Nigeria may have no idea of what it is to live in poverty, but many others, in large number do. Nearly all Nigerians are aware of the consequences of poverty. These include reactions from feeling of relative deprivation (eg: the Niger Delta militancy), pilfering, pick-pocketing and thuggery (as seen in street live in Nigerian cities), and chain of reactions that often interfere with good care, health care, food consumption, resources (clothing, money), transportation, housing, water supply, electricity, etc. Consequences of poverty generate chain reactions that often affect generation after generation; and children have remained prime victims.

In their work, Waldfogel and Washbrook (2011) found that achievement gaps between children from poor and rich homes manifest very early in life and can persist throughout life time. Elsewhere researchers observed the role of non-cognitive skills which comes as a result of poor parental background, and lack of socio-emotional traits such as self-esteem and self-control that develop early in life (Heckman, Stixrud, and Urzua 2006). Strong evidence also exists that suggest that children from poor homes have an increased risk of intellectual and behavioral development problems (Dahl & Lochner, 2012). Large negative associations between poverty during early childhood and academic outcomes have been consistently found in many studies (Corcoran, 2001). Early childhood interventions can therefore play an important role in addressing poverty in

Nigeria. Such interventions need to be broad infocus, and should address issues of early childhood schooling and high-quality child care, as well as addressing family circumstance and parenting practices.

Promoting early childhood development has four targeted achievements:

- a). *Expanding access to primary education for Disadvantaged Children*: This involves establishing high-quality preschool programs in villages where preschools do not exist, expanding access to qualitative and functional education so that children who have limited access to school can attain. Government should promote expansion of cost-effective, high-quality public primary schools for low-income children as opposed to private schools.
- b). *Address the parenting divide*: This involves supporting parenting and researches aims at collecting of evidence to develop more-effective parenting interventions towards improving child development in early years.
- c). *Reducing unintended pregnancies*: This involves embarking on wide intensive social marketing order than public sensitization campaign to encourage young women to use long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs) in order to delay pregnancy and prevent unplanned pregnancies.

Goal 2: Supporting Disadvantaged Youth

Improving the quality of education provided to the poor is seen by many scholars as the best way to break the cycle of poverty (Moore, Redd, Burkhauser & Collins, 2009). In this context the important of education suggests that disadvantage children must stay in school and complete their education. This may involve free and compulsory education for children of school age, especially at primary education level.

Supporting disadvantage children can be achieved through programmes that seek to:

- a). *Provide effective mentoring*: This will involve encouraging the creation of mentoring programmes in churches, mosques, community organizations, NGOs, and schools that would periodically embark on educational campaigns in the communities.
- b). *Expanding and enforcing Nomadic education*: This seeks to achieve a dual purpose, creating employment opportunity for children who are nomads and providing them with education.
- c). *Address academic barriers to higher education*: This involves reducing the cost of public examinations and the provision of remedial classes for youths who cannot get admission into higher schools and colleges as well as universities. It also involves the provision for effective resources and supports to equip students with skills that they need to succeed in schools and the world of work.

Goal 3: Building Skills

Skill development and job creation are critical components of the fight against poverty. Effective education enhances skills creation that is needed for effective and efficient workforce. Researches have shown that high-skilled workers have their wages increase while low-skilled workers have seen their economic positions eroded (Rees, 1986; Painter, 2010; Bruce, & John, 2014). Additionally, globalization of the world of work has shown that employment prospects for middle-skilled workers in the civil service work like messenger, cleaner, security men, clerical officers, and administrative officers' positions are declining. Global economic forces tend to support those in the production, craft, technology, sport and operative positions. Building apprenticeship programmes for the youth, therefore, may result in a productivity enhancing careers that can reduce inequality and expand opportunity (Halpern, 2009).

Building skills seeks to achieve three targets, viz:

- a). *Expanding apprenticeship opportunities*: This will involve series of Local, State and Federal government initiatives to expand access to registered apprenticeship programs by creating engineering and technological learning initiatives; building on existing youth apprenticeship programmes on ICT, extending availability of unemployment benefits from the federal level to include State government support for unemployed youth, training and support for youth initiated self-employed venture.
- b). *Improved employment outcomes for disadvantaged students*: This will involve deliberate funding and support of entrepreneurial education and creative skill acquisitions in Schools. In particular, building skills can be enhanced through giving financial incentives for public schools to build and expand classes on entrepreneurial education in Nigeria.
- c). *Provide the poor with skills to succeed in the labor market*: This will involve extending credit facilities and or funding to women through Poverty Reduction loan (PRL) for the purpose of small scale businesses like trading, farming, and or skill acquisition training. This can bring additional benefits in addressing social inequalities which tackle gender inequality and promote women empowerment.

Goal 4: Improving Safety Net and Work Support

The creation of a strong safety net is necessary to lift the poorest households out of poverty. This is what the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seeks to achieve by setting 2030 as terminal date for curbing extreme

poverty. Elsewhere, safety net has been found to be very effective for curbing poverty among the elderly through programmes like Social Security, Medicare, and Supplemental Security (Danziger & Danziger, 2005). Although Nigeria has the National Health Insurance (NHIS) and the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) as safety nets for government workers, many states of the federation are yet to adopt the contributory pension arrangement. The NHIS is only applicable to government workers as those in private companies have no NHIS arrangement.

In addition to asking for the extension of NHIS to privately employed persons, we recommend the adoption of safety net through payment of Living Minimum Wage (LMW). The federal minimum wage has been the focus of substantial debate by academics and policymakers for many years now. It is suggestive that thoughtful reforms of the Nigeria's minimum wage policy can help reduce poverty and mitigate inequality among the citizens. Many factors, including consistent rise in inflation level have rendered existing minimum wage meaningless.

II. CONCLUSION

Poverty reduction will be more effective if appropriate policy is put in place. The World Bank's opinion on sustainable poverty reduction programmes becomes most relevant for effective poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria, especially on the recommendation that "countries should invest in basic social services" (World Bank, 2002, p.4). Sustainable poverty reduction anchored on reduction in inequality, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, productive employment and economic growth. Our argument here is that social intervention strategies that include promoting early childhood development, supporting disadvantaged youth, building skills, and improving safety net and work support, can fast track the achievement of sustainable poverty reduction.

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