# POVERTY REDUCTION IN NIGERIA AND THE ATTAINMENT OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

**KOGI STATE UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF PUBLIC ADMISTRATION.**

**A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, VOL. 3(1). JUNE, PP.239-246.**

by
Idris Ahmed Jamo
Department of Public Administration
Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.
08028536501
iajamo112@yahoo.com
and
Abbas Salihu
Registry Department
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
08052874210
Abbassalihu86@yahoo.com

***ABSTRACT***

***Poverty is among the most challenging threat to human development. Since time immemorial people have used different strategies to eradicate it in their midst. In fact poverty has become one of the serious issues that attracted global concern. It is among this reason that the congress of the United Nation General Assembly in 2000 unanimously adopted the Millennium Declaration which was letter transformed into eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).However, poverty eradication is one of the eight Goals of MDGs. Nigeria which is a member of the United Nation has already pronounced its efforts to achieve MDGs. The paper assesses country's effort in its task to eradicate poverty. To obtain our data, secondary sources were utilized. The study revealed that, Nigeria will hardly meet its MDGs particularly poverty eradication, partly due to high rate of corruption, mismanagement, underdevelopment of the real sector of the economy and finally lack of adherent to rule of law. The study recommended that, unless the above mentioned vices were minimized, poverty eradication in the country would achieve meaningful results.***

## Introduction

Since time immemorial, poverty remains one of the serious threat to human development. Since then, people started adopting different strategies to eradicate it in their midst. In fact, poverty has

become one of the serious issues not only to the developing countries but also to the developed ones. In essence, poverty has attracted attention of scholars, government and international communities. The situation is so glaring that, the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) report in 2005 shows that more than 1.2 billion people, one in every five on earth survive on less than US $1 per day. While its 2008 report as observed by Ibrahim & Igbozor (2008) shows that, three richest people in the world have assets that exceed the combined growths of 48 less developed countries.

It is so ironic that Nigeria is the sixth largest exporter of oil and at the same time host the largest poor people after China and India (Igbozor, 2008)However, the incidence of poverty in 1999 fall to 42.7%and increased again to 65.6%in 2000'this trend continued till2003.In 2004 according to its report the incidence of poverty in the country decreased to 54.4% and maintained this position till 2006and jumped to54.5% in 2007 and increased again to 63.6% in 2008(MDGsMid -point report 2008). Again, the 2010 report of the Federal Bureau of Statistics revealed that, 112.5 million Nigerians out of 163 million populations live in poverty. However, the report further revealed that, apart from the relative poverty which puts the country's poverty rate at 99.248 million or 60.9 per cent, the dollar per day measure, which put the poverty at 61.2 per cent; and subjective poverty measure which put the poverty level at 93.9 per cent (NBS, 2010);Not only that, MDG 2010 report shows that , although poverty is reduced since 2000, the reality is that, among every ten Nigerians , five still live in poverty .Growth has not been sufficiently equitable or generated employment(http:llnewsafricanpress.com\2010\08\21\nigeria is unlikely –to-achieve-MDG-by 2015)Again, the United Nation Human Development report put Nigeria Human Development Index at 0.423, making the country out of 169 Countries with comparable data. Nigeria therefore is among the lowest ranking Nations in the low development category, it is in the $27^{th}$ position, counting from the rump (www.thannationlineng.net\2011\index.php\news\22120-nigeria-mile)

In the light of the above data, it is quite clear that, the country's efforts towards eradicating poverty is quite unappreciated and in spite of all government efforts to address poverty in the country, the problem is still persists. This calls to the question the efficacy of the poverty eradication strategies adopted so far.

The paper raised the following research questions, what are the reasons behind persistent poverty growth in the country despite efforts by the successive governments? What are the factors responsible for poverty in the country? Can Nigeria meet goal No. 1 (i.e. poverty eradication) of the millennium development goal by the year 2015? What are the possible solutions to the country's persistent poverty? Is there any relationship between poverty eradication and development? These problematic questions this paper wants to address.

These questions would be addressed in the context of the following objectives;

i. To defined the concepts of poverty and development
ii. To identify indices of poverty
iii. To identify causes of poverty
iv. To analyze the state of poverty in Nigeria particularly with regards to meeting goal No.1of the millennium development goal.

The study is content analysis relying basically on secondary data. Literatures from text books, journals publications as well as e-materials were utilized.

The paper is arranged into four sections, section one presents introduction, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives of the study, an exploration of the concepts of poverty and development. Section two is the conceptual exploration of poverty and development, while Section three present the state of poverty and MDG in Nigeria and the way forward. Section four present our findings, conclusion and recommendations.

**Conceptual Exploration of Poverty and Development**

It is pertinent important to begin with exploration of the key concepts in this work, first what is poverty?.

Poverty like many concepts in social sciences defies universally single definition. However, scholars over the years have offered series of definitions of the concepts .For instance, Tamande (2003) defined poverty as a state of extreme social and economic deprivation, it is a situation where an individual or household fails to attain and maintain a specific level of wellbeing which is considered as the acceptable minimum standard of living in a given society. In similar conception, Sen (2008) conceived poverty as a lack of basic opportunities of material wellbeing and the failure to attain a certain minimum capacity. While World Bank (1975) conceived poverty as the condition of life so degrading as to insult human dignity, a condition depicted by poor nutrition, in adequate shelter and low health standard. Again, (UNDP 1997) conceived

poverty as the absence of some basic capacities to function, the absence of opportunities to live valuable and valued life.

Therefore, a concise and universally accepted definition of poverty is elusive largely because it affects many aspects of human conditions, including physical, moral and psychological. Different criteria have therefore been used to conceptualize poverty as a result of insufficient income for securing basic goods and services. Others view poverty in part as a function of education, health, life expectancy, child mortality etc. Blackwood and Lynch (1994) identified the poor using the criteria of the levels of consumption and expenditure (Ajekayi and Adedeyi 2001). But World Bank (2006) conceptualized poverty to meeting the basic needs (such as physical, food, health care, education, shelter etc. and non-physical such as participation and identity etc.) requirements for a meaningful life.

**Development**

Seers in his conception on development he relates it to eradication of poverty in a society among other variables when he asserted that:

> *The questions to ask about country's development are therefore; what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has be en happening to inequality? If all the three of these have declined from high levels than beyond doubt this has a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if the entire three have, it would be strange to call the result "Development" even if per capita income doubled. (Seer,1969:3).*

From the foregoing it is clear that, any country aspiring for development, must strive to reduce poverty to a minimum level. It is against this background that the United Nations Millennium declaration was adopted in September 2000 which was blessed by the largest gathering of heads of states ever in the history of United Nations. Eight Main targeted goals were identified. The eight target goals using 1999 as a base line are;

i. Eradication extreme poverty and hunger 2015 target have proportion of people living on less than 1 day and those suffering hunger.
ii. Achieve universal basic education 2015 target achieve universal primary completion.

iii. Promote gender equality 2005/2015 target eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education enrolment by 2015.

iv. Reduce children mortality; 2015 target reduce by two thirds the child mortality rate.

v. Improve maternal health; 2015 target reduce by three quarters the proportion of women dying in child birth.

vi. Combat AIDs, malaria and other diseases 2015 target half and begin to reverse the incidence of HIV-AID's, and major diseases.

vii. Ensure environmental sustainability; integrate the principle of sustainable development into country polices and programmes and reverse the loss environmental resources. 2015 target reduce by half the proportion of people without access to clean drinking water and basic sanitation.

By 2020 achieve a significant improvement in the lives of atleast 100million slum dwellers

vii Develop a global partnership for development. (Igbuzor 2008)

**The State of Poverty in Nigeria**

For a decade after independence in 1960, Nigeria remains a country with a per capita income of U.S $260. At the end of the third millennium, approximately 70 % of the population still lived on less than US $1 a day, an indication of extreme poverty. Real GDP growth has remained sluggish, averaging 3.5% per annum. Since 2000. It is against this background, the Nigerian government joined the leaders of the countries all over the world to fight poverty, where the congress of the United Nations General Assembly of Heads of State and Government in September 2000 unanimously adopted the millennium declaration which was later transformed into the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Consequent upon the inauguration of the MDGs which represent an attempt at combating poverty through the global partnership for development appear to constitute the key to Nigeria's escape from poverty trap. However, the effort toward achieving MDG goals appears to be unrealistic.

The poverty is geometrically increasing deep and pervasive with about 70 percent of the population living in absolute poverty (Okonjo-Iweala Soludo and Muktar, 2003:, and Punch Newspaper 2009:14, in Oshewolo,s 2011).

Nigeria remains poor country with an annual per capital income of $300. This figure is below the sub-Saharan average of $450 (AFRODEV, 2006). At the down of the third millennium, there was approximately 70% of extreme poverty. Real GDP growth has remained sluggish averaging 3.5 per annum since 2000. See AFRODAD, 2005: iv & i, Oshewolo S 2001). Nigeria is among the 20 centuries with the widest gap between rich and poor in the world (UNDP, 2005).

Over the period of 1980-1996, the proportion of poor people rose from 28.1% in 1980 to 65.6% in 1996 (AFRODEV 2006) again, the number of people living in poverty declined from 65.6% in 1996 to 54.4% in 2004, while 35 out of 100 people live in extreme poverty and about 30 out of 100 children are under weight. The rate of poverty incidence has been higher in rural areas than in urban areas, with wide disparity across the zones. However, food crisis has become very critical problem to the Nigeria's quest for poverty eradication and its quest for sustainable development. (UNDP 2007, AFRODEV, 2006, Oshewolo, 2011, Matusa, 2005).

However, in spite of the expressed concerns by the successive governments, and the Plethora of policies and programmes to convert poverty in the country over the years, statistical results shows that, the incidence of poverty, nation wide continued to worsened over the years. Hence, the 2004 report reveals that, there is strong indication that, Nigeria will hardly meets its millennium development goals particularly eradicating poverty among Nigerians as projected for instance the report on MDGs pointed out that, " based on available information it is unlikely that the country will be able to meet most of the goals by 2015 especially the goals related to eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, reducing child maternal mortality and combating HIV/AIDs, malaria and other diseases "(Millennium Development Goals Report, 2004).

While the MDGs report of 2005 pointed out that,

> *There is high potential to achieve 3 of the goals (Goals 2,7 and 8), likelihood to a achieve one with strong will (Goal 1) and the need to sustain efforts to ensure that the country meets the remaining four goals (Goals 3,4 and 6). The MDG 2006 further stresses the possibility of Nigeria achieving goals (2,7 and 8) while the health MDG remains daunting challenges for Nigeria. (Millennium Development goals Report 2005).*

However, from the foregoing contradicting reports, the reality is the fact that, poverty is increasing; this increase may be due to lack of strong will among other factors.

The 2010 MDG's on poverty in Nigeria revealed that, recent economic growth, particularly in agriculture, has markedly reduced the provision of underweight children from 35.7 in 1990 to 23.1 percent in 2008. However, growth is not generated enough jobs and the effect on poverty has not yet clear (the most recent data is from 2004 growth need to be more equitable and more broad based (www.ng.undp.org/mdgsngprogress.shtml).

In fact, it is argued that, all the eight goals are important strategies to reduce poverty and inequality in a society for the fact that, education provides opportunities to employment and provides awareness among the citizens. Indeed a country with more educated people has less poverty. Not only that health contributes to poverty eradication, for the fact that a country with a healthy population is a wealthy nation, and any country that fails to provide sufficient health service to its citizens may leads to low productivity, low savings and investment which may automatically lead to cycle of poverty.

Again, sufficient electricity supply in a country may lead to economic growth, since majority of small, medium and large industries largely depend on electricity supply in the country. In essence, industries in the country provide a number of employment opportunities to the population and increase country's export earnings. Therefore, sufficient electricity supply is pre-requisite to development and poverty eradication.

Apart from that boosting agricultural production is another strategy to eradicate poverty in Nigeria. Since agriculture till date remains the mainstay of the Nigerian economy. It is the main source of food for most of the population a major source of raw materials for the agro-allied industries and a potent sources of much needed foreign exchange (World Bank, 1998, Okoumadewa, 1997) while 85% of the total production comes from small-scale poor farmers (Okuneye, 1995) our assumption is that improving farmers livelihood and income through boosting agricultural production and minimizing his problem is unanimous to eradicating poverty in the country. Agriculture continued to remain the largest source of employment generation (with about 60%) in the country. However, the unfortunate situation, is the fact that agricultural sector and the peasant farmer continued to receive less attention by the government of the federation, for instance, report shows that:

> *Over 90% of the Nigeria agricultural out put come from peasant farmers who dwell in the rural areas, the vast majority of the farmers have limited access to modern inputs and other productive resources and are unlikely to have access to pesticides, fertilizers, hybrids seeds and irrigation without some form of public sector intervention (www.v.nigeria:1)*

Although the above situation is not the only contributing factor to poverty growth in the country, like other dimensions, there is no one cause or determinant of poverty. On the contrary, combination of several factors contributes to poverty, they include; low or negative economic policies defici9incies in the labor market resulted in limited growth low productivity and low wages in the informal sector, and lag in human resource development. Other factors which have contributed to a decline and determinants of poverty include increase in crime and violence, environmental degradation, retrenchment of workers, a fall in the real value of safety nets, and changes in family structures. (Ajakaye and Adeyeye 2007).

Therefore, for a country to develop and free from absolute poverty the above causes need to be taken into consideration. Although, since the early days of independence, there were adhoc strategies targeted to reduce growth of poverty in the country among such strategies can be captured in the countries national development plan in 1962-85.

Other anti- poverty strategies or programmes employed by the successive government in the country include; Directorate for food, Road and Rural infrastructures (DFRRI) 1986, National Directorate For Employment (NDE) 1986, Better life Programme (BLP) 1987, peoples Bank (PBN) 1989, Community Banks (CB) 1990, Family Support Programme (FSP) 1994, Family Economic Advancement Programme ( FEAP) 1997. Poverty Eradication or Alleviation Programme 1999,

National Economic Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS). &State Economic Empowerment Development Strategies (SEEDS) &Local Government Economic Empowerment Development Strategies (LEEDS) IN 2001 and wealth creation among one of the seven point agenda in 2007, Goal NO1 of Millennium development goals MDGs 2001.

However, in spite of the above efforts and other related strategies exerted on poverty related programmes and scheme in the country, thus suggesting that the programmes and schemes were ineffective (Obadan 2001). This calls for the efficacy of poverty eradication strategies adopted so far (Usman & 2001).

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

From the foregoing, it shows that Nigeria is among the countries endowed with both human and natural resources. Yet its citizens are suffering from absolute poverty, in fact, failure of the government to utilize the resources judiciously resulted in the present state of poverty in the country. Therefore government, private sector and other stakeholders, individuals have their own role to play in the country's quest for poverty eradication and sustainable development.

The study also found that corruption, mismanagement and lack of adherence to rule of law in Nigeria are pervasive and there is no way the country can escape from poverty trap if the rate of corruption, mismanagement and lack of strict adherence to the principle of rule of law, are still high. All the three tiers of government in the country in the country need to be involved in this crusade, so as to emancipate their people form absolute poverty.

The study also discovered that, Nigeria will hardly meet its No 1 Millennium development goal. i.e. poverty eradication by the year 2015, this failure as observed by the study among other factors is due to the neglect of agriculture which constitute the largest sector capable of employment generation and sources of raw materials of our domestic industries more than any sector. The study is of the view that, for a Nigeria to achieve development, agricultural sector among other sect or must be given special consideration.

The study also found out that, since independence there have been serious efforts by the successive government to eradicate poverty in the country, However poverty continue to increase, this call for the review of the existing strategies either they are ineffective or the policies are not relevant to the situation. Therefore, there is need for government to embark on poverty eradication policy that is relevant directly to the lives of the poor people in the country.

The study also found that, poverty is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that has exited from time immemorial and defies unanimous single definition. The study also found that there is nexus between poverty eradication and development i.e. any country aspiring for development, efforts must be put in place towards poverty eradication. Therefore presence of development means disappearance of poverty in the society.

**References**


AFRODAD (2005) *The politics of MDGS and Nigeria; Critical Appraisal of Global Partnership for Development (Goal 8)* Marare Zimbabwe, AFRODAD.

AFRODEV (2006) *Impact of Population Growth on the Attainment of the MDGs* in Nigeria Abuja. Nigeria AFRODEV.

Ajakaiye D.O and Adeyeye V.A (2001) *Concepts, measurement and Causes of Poverty. A paper presented at the in-House Seminar on "Poverty Alleviation: A more programmatic approach"* for central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Executive Staff Mina Central Bank of Nigeria Economic and Financial Review. Vol 39. No. 4

Blackwood and Lynch (1994)*"The Measurement of Inequality and Poverty: A Policy maker's Guide to Literature*" World Development 22 (4): 567-578.

Camagarajah et al (1997) *The Evolution of Poverty and Welfare assessment in Nigeria*". Background Document, No. 1715 (Jam). World Bank, Washington D.C.

Central Bank of Nigeria 1996 p. 95

Federal office of Statistics (FOS) *Poverty profile in Nig, 1980,1998*

Ibrahim J. and Igbuzor O. (2008) *Can Nigeria meet the MDGs in 2015?.*

Igbozor O (2008) *Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Poverty Eradication in Nigeria Proceedings of the Paper on can Nigeria meet the MDGs in 2015*, Central for Demand Development Kaduna.

MDGs report 2005 World Bank (1975) Annual Report. Washington D.C, U.S.A.

MDGsReport2004.Retrievedfromhttp:llnewsafricanpress.com\2010\08\21\nigeria is unlikely –to-achieve-MDG-by 2015).

MDGsReport2010.Retrievedfrom,http:newsafricanpress.com\2010\08\21\nigeria unlikely –to-achieve-mdgs-by-2015.

Mutasa. C.(2005) *Politics of MDGs and Nigeria: A critical Appraisal of Global Partnarship for Development*. Retrieved from www.afroad.org/ downloads publications/MDGNig.pdf.

National Bureau of Statistic(2010). Available from, www.myondostate.coom/.../112-5million - nigerians-live-in-poverty-national-bureau-of-statistics.

National Planning Commission, National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), Abuja, 2004.

Obadan M.I (2001) *Poverty Reduction in Nigeria the way forward*. A paper Presented at the in-House Seminar on *'Poverty Alleviation; A More Pragmatic Approach* 'For Central Bank of Nigeria. Economic and Financial Review.Vol.39.NO4.

Ogwumike F.O (1998) *"Poverty Alleviation Strategies in Nigeria*" in measuring and monitoring poverty in Nigeria, Proceeding of the 7th Annual Conference of the Zonal Research Units of Central Bank Nigeria.

Okojie, C.E, Anyanwu, J.C. Ogwumike, F.O and Alayande B.A (2000) *Poverty in Nigeria: An Analysis of Gender Issues, Access to Social services and labour market*. AERC report..

Okpe,I.J, Abu, G.A (2009) *Foreign Private Investment and Poverty Reduction in Nigeria* (1975-2003), J Soc. Sci 19(3): 205-211.
Okumadewa, F. (1997) *"Poverty and Income in Nigeria Measurement and Strategies for Reform*" Paper Presented at the Vision 2010 Workshop April 1997 Abuja.
Oshewolo S.(2008) International Journal of Politics and Good Governance vol. 2 No. 2.3 Quarter III 2011. ISSN:0976-1195.
Seers, D(1969) *The Meaning of Development* , International Development Review, 19,(3).
Sen. A (2008) *Development as Freedom*. Oxford University Press.
Soludo. C.C and Mukhtar.M.(2003) (eds) The Debt Trap in Nigeria.
Tamande, T. (2003) *Poverty and Democracy in Nigeria Interface and Consequences*. Proceedings of The National Conference by the Institute for Development Research ABU, Zaria Published by Dat and Partners logistics Ltd. Nigeria.
The World Bank (1996) *Nigerian in a Midst of Plenty. The Challenges of Growth and Inclusion*. Report No. 14733 UNI the World Bank, Washington D.C.
*Towards a Sustainable Debts Strategy*, pp. 1-19. Trenton, Africa World Press. Inc.
UNDP (2007) *MDGs in Nigeria*: Current Progress Retrieved from http://web.ng.undp.org/mdgsngprogress.shtml
UNDP report 1994
UNDP report 1999
UNDP report 2005.
United Nations Human Development report 2011.Retrieved from www.thannation non lineng.net\20011\index.php\news\22120-nigeria-mile.
World Bank (1975) Annual Report. Washington D.C, U.S.A.