

Poverty as Development Challenge in Nigeria: An Assessment of Some Poverty Eradication Policies

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Abstract: Since independence in 1960 from British colonial rule, the various leadership of Nigeria have adopted various developmental strategies with view to reduce or to some extent do away with poverty but it could not, due to the complex nature of the country's poverty which can be termed as chronic. This is because poverty in Nigeria is persistent. It is estimated that up to 70% of Nigerians are living below poverty line. Nigeria has been branded by the international community as the second most corrupt nation in the World. For three consecutive years, 2000, 2001 and 2002, it has maintained that unenviable position. The rating came up as a consequence of several failed attempts by the administration to wipe out corruption and poverty or reduce them to a tolerable level in the polity. It is absolutely frustrating when one realizes the immense potentials in Nigeria. Sixteen years is enough time for any administration to sort out the fundamental problem of the country (poverty). All the recent poverty alleviation and development programs and initiatives are geared toward realizing the number one (1) Millennium Development Goal (MDGs), which is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by the year 2015. We have passed the deadline to the target of MDGs, these policies and programs are judged to be unsatisfactory and inadequate in meeting the MDGs. This therefore, necessitates the need for an elaborate study to critically assess the interplay between corruption, development and chronic poverty in Nigeria. The question to be asked is what are the problems of Nigeria's poverty reduction policies and development plans? To answer this fundamental question the paper clearly argued that Nigeria does not need any new policy on development and chronic poverty. All it needs is seriousness in terms of the implementation of existing policies to address the chronic nature of the Nigerian poverty. Nigerians need to sit up with a view to addressing corruption in all its ramifications. This is the only way Nigeria would get out of the shackle of chronic poverty and by extension development in general.

Keywords: Corruption, Development, Chronic poverty, Nigeria, Millennium Development Goals MDGs

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that Nigeria is trapped in a web of chronic poverty, which affects its performance in the development arena [1]. The country has all it takes to develop but unfortunately it could not due to the complex nature of the country's social problems. The country is endowed with vast agricultural and natural resources, and has a relatively important industrial sector (48% of the GDP in 2001), compared to other West African or Sub-Saharan countries (less than 30%). The 2013 Human Development index has placed Nigeria among the 20 poorest countries in the World. It is estimated that up to 70% of Nigerians are living below poverty line. Using poverty indicators such as literacy level, access to safe water, nutrition, infant and maternal mortality, and the number of people living on less than \$1 a day, Nigeria is found to rank among

the 25 poorest nations in the world below Kenya, Ghana and Zambia [1, 3]. The job market is over saturated; the literacy level in Nigeria remained at the bottom. According to Daniel Back [2] the fees paid for the politicians' children is far more than the budget in education. This is a manifestation of corruption which has radical implication for the country's drive for development.

Nigeria has been branded by the international community as the second most corrupt nation in the World. For three consecutive years, 2000, 2001 and 2002, it has maintained that unenviable position [1, 4]. The rating came up as a consequence of several failed attempts by the Nigeria's administration to wipe out corruption and poverty or reduce them to a tolerable level in the polity. It is absolutely frustrating when one

realizes the immense potentials in Nigeria. Sixteen years is enough time for any administration to sort out the fundamental problem of the country (poverty). All the recent poverty alleviation and development programs and initiatives are geared toward realizing the number one (1) Millennium Development Goal (MDGs), which is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by the year 2015. The year 2015 deadline to the target of MDGs had passed; these policies and programs are judged to be unsatisfactory and inadequate in meeting the MDGs. This therefore, necessitates the need for an elaborate study to critically assess the interplay between corruption, development and chronic poverty in Nigeria.

Since independence in 1960 from British colonial rule, the various leadership of this country have adopted various developmental strategies with view to reduce or to some extent do away with poverty but it could not, due to the complex nature of the country's poverty which can be termed as chronic. This is because poverty in Nigeria is persistent. The question to be asked is what are the problems of Nigeria's poverty reduction policies and development plans? To answer these fundamental questions the paper is divided into six sections. Section one focused on a synopsis of the paper. Section two is devoted to conceptual clarifications; where key concepts used in the paper were clarified. Section three dwelled on an historical overview of Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Nigeria. Section four projected a picture of the Poverty Profile in Nigeria between 1999 and 2010. Section five looked at shortcomings of Poverty Alleviation Interventions in Nigeria and finally section six draws some conclusions.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The concept of development

Development has been defined variously. The economists and administrators are, of course explicit, defining development in terms of increases in elaborate quantitative indices of national product, income, consumptions, etc., though there are, sometimes contradictory definitions. Pitt [5] uses development in the very general sense of the perceived increased effectiveness of social and economic activities and functions of the society or situation and in the range of options open to people. Ultimately, Pitt sees development as the perceived improvement in the quality of life, even when this means fewer goods and services. According to Walter Rodney [6], development is a many-sided process in human society. At the individual level, it means increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, self-discipline etc. At the societal level, development encompasses an overall approach in which a particular society has become capable of realizing its potentials in several spheres of life-political, economic, social etc.

Historically, the meaning of development or development of society was equated to economic growth. Adam Smith in his classical economic theory developed the idea that for a society to develop it needs first, economic growth i.e economic growth is equal to development. The classical theorists believe that development will come about naturally if there is increase in income, production of goods, services and wealth [7].

Development on the other hand is multi-dimensional [8]. Seers accepts the economic meaning to be central having radical implications on the political, social and cultural aspects. This implies that development may be equated to economic growth provided that the latter leads to the combating of social and political problems. In his article 'The meaning of development' he identified three fundamental questions to be asked about development of a country. These are what happened to poverty, what happened to unemployment, what happened to inequality? If these variables are on the decline from high level, then beyond doubt there has been a period of development of the country concerned. But if one or two of these central indicators are going worse, it will be strange to call the result as development even if the national income has developed like in the case of Nigeria. Considering the level of poverty and unemployment and the wide gap between the rich and the poor, one can argue that this assertion is very relevant in an attempt to establish a link between these problems and the level of development in the country.

The concept of poverty

In an attempt to understand chronic poverty there is the need for the definition of the root word-poverty. According to the World Bank, poverty is hunger. It is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see doctor [9]. Poverty can be defined in absolute and relative terms. Relative poverty is said to exist when the subjects under consideration are poor in relation to others. In this case, poverty is comparative and subjective. Absolute poverty is however a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs of food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter education and information; Mohammed,. In general terms poverty is better understood and appreciated as a condition in which its victims are unable to have access to basic needs of life. These needs include having enough to eat, safe water to drink, adequate housing, and health care [10]. To these basic needs can be added intellectual development through education, and adequate access to productive resources and participatory opportunities for the victims to free themselves from the effects of poverty. Certain common indices and factors are generally used to identify the various manifestations of poverty in a given time and place. It is in order to simplify the global

measurement of poverty on a universal scale a highly generalized denominator of one (US\$ 1.0) was below which a person is classified as poor.

Poverty is better understood and appreciated as a condition in which its victims are unable to have access to the basic needs of life. These needs include not having enough to eat, safe water to drink, adequate housing and health care. In Nigeria majority of people take cereals and starchy food to the absence of nutritional food. Thus Nigerians are ill-fed, ill-clothed; ill- educated and is in a state of ill-health.

Causes of poverty

No matter the yardstick use to measure poverty, it has been established that poverty is caused by many factors. Khalid [11] argued that “the main causes of poverty in Nigeria are unemployment, ignorance, poor governance, corruption, high inflation, environmental degradation and high population growth”.

The World Bank’s Poverty Task Force has identified the following as the main causes of poverty:

- Inadequate access to employment opportunities
- Inadequate physical assets, such as land and capital, and minimal access by the poor to credit even on a small scale.
- Inadequate means of supporting rural development in poor regions.
- Inadequate access to markets where the poor can sell goods and services.
- Low endowment of human capital.
- Destruction of natural resources, leading to environmental degradation and reduced productivity.
- Inadequate access to assistance for those living at the margin and those victimized by transitory poverty.
- Lack of inclusive participation; which is the failure to include the poor in the process of designing development programmes.

Chronic poverty Defined

Chronic poverty refers to a status where a certain level of poverty persists through time. It is a type of poverty that is persistent, and therefore permanent in nature. A person who is chronically poor has no capacity to climb out of poverty trap on his/her own without external assistance. The person has no means or capacity of becoming non-poor. An example of such person is uneducated individual born in poverty without assets such as land [12]. As argued in chronic poverty research centre (CPRC) [25] report, the distinguishing feature of chronic poverty is, simply, extended duration. Chronically poor people are those who are usually living below the poverty line. They are likely to be multi-dimensionally deprived, lacking not

only income but also capabilities such as good health or educational achievement. It is this combination of capability deprivations, low levels of material assets and social or political marginality that keeps people poor over a long period of time. Karofi and Malami [13] argued that the chronic poor in Nigeria do not have adequate shelter, in many cases they have only one or two set of clothing worn at all times.

According to the summary of chronic poverty report 2004-2005 “chronic poverty is absolute poverty that is experienced for an extended period of time” (<http://chronicpoverty.org>). A person living in absolute poverty is not able to satisfy his/her minimum requirements for food, clothing or shelter. Thus, chronically poor people are people who are living below an absolute poverty line (defined normally in terms of money-metric-expenditure, consumption and income-but it could also be defined in terms of wider aspect of deprivation, or subjectivity) for a ‘long time’. Such poverty may be passed from one generation to another.

The CPRC outlined three main forms of chronic poverty; namely

- Long- term poverty-poverty that is experienced by an individual or household for so many years that is unlikely to change
- Life-course poverty-poverty that is experienced over the entire length of a person’s life
- Intergenerational poverty-poverty or poverty related capital that is transmitted from parents to children via the conditions of childhood and youth, young adulthood and inheritance.

According to Chronic Poverty Report 2008-2009 the chronically poor experience multiple deprivations, including hunger, under nutrition, illiteracy, lack of access to safe drinking water and basic health services, social discrimination, physical insecurity and political exclusion. The report further identified five main traps that underpin chronic poverty, namely; insecurity, limited citizenship, spatial disadvantage, social discrimination and poor work opportunities.

The distinguishing feature of chronic poverty is its extended duration in absolute poverty. Therefore, chronically poor people always or usually, live below poverty line, which is normally defined in terms of money indicator (e.g consumption, income etc.) but could also be defined in terms of wider or subjective aspects of deprivation Scott, 2008. This is different from the transitorily poor, who move in and out of poverty, or only occasionally fall below poverty line. Various characteristics are commonly associated with chronic poverty. These include geographic locations such as remote rural areas, urban slums and conflict

zones; disadvantaged social groups such as tribes, ethnic groups and refugees. Within the households, the elderly, women and children, people living with disabilities, serious illness, widows, and orphans are also more likely to live in chronic poverty.

CPRC uses chronic poverty to describe extreme poverty that persists for long time-many years, an entire life, or even across generations. People living in chronic poverty are those who have benefitted least from economic growth and development. They depend on work which is insecure, low paid, unhealthy, and have little scope to improve their situation.

CPRC estimates that between 300 and 420 million people are trapped in poverty [14]. To Moore, these people experience deprivation over many years, often over their entire lives, and sometimes pass poverty to their children.

The above suggests that the chronically poor people are not a distinct group, but usually are those who are discriminated against, stigmatized or 'invisible': socially-marginalized ethnic, religious, indigenous, nomadic and caste groups; migrants and bonded laborers, refugees and internally displaced people with impairment and some illness especially HIV/AIDS [14].

While chronically poor people are found in all parts of the world, the largest numbers live in South Asia. The highest incidence is in sub-Saharan Africa, where between 30% and 40% of all present 'US \$ 1/day' poor are trapped in poverty: an estimated 90 to 120 million people (Ibid).

On the causes of chronic poverty, Moore [14] argued that the causes of chronic poverty are complex and usually involve set of overlaying factors. Sometimes they are the same as the causes of poverty, only more intense, widespread and lasting. In other cases there is qualitative difference between the causes of transitory and chronic poverty, except that rarely is there a single, clear cause. Mostly, chronic poverty is as a result of multiple interacting factors operating at levels from the intra-household to the global. Some of these factors are maintenance of chronic poverty: they operate so as to keep poor people poor. Others are drivers of chronic poverty: they push vulnerable non-poor and transitory poor people into poverty out of which they cannot find a way out.

Corruption defined

Literally corruption is an attempt by individual or group to involve themselves in dirty or shady deals in government, public or private setup. Osoba [15] defined corruption as 'Antisocial behavior conferring improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms, and which

undermines the authority's capacity to secure the welfare of all citizens'. On the other hand, Transparency International sees corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gains [4].

AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA

In Nigeria, poverty has evolved over the past few decades to become a critical development issue, demanding concerted efforts from government, civil society organizations and Nigeria's development partners. Initial attention was focused on rural development, together with town and country planning as the approach to dealing with the problem [16].

Osahan [17] argued that poverty reduction strategies in Nigeria could be divided into three phases; the pre-SAP era, the SAP era and the democratic era.

- i. The pre-SAP era: During this period (1960-1985), poverty reduction was not the direct focus of Nigeria's development planning and management. The federal government and its agencies embarked on various development projects that had beneficial impact on rural inhabitants, although some of the programmes did not target poor people. Development projects and programmes established during this era include the River Basin Development Authorities (RBDA), Agricultural Development Programmes (ADP), the Rural Electrification Scheme (RES) and the Rural Banking Scheme (RBS). The River Basin Development Authorities established by Decree 37 of August 1976 is one of the earliest attempts at combating poverty via improved agricultural production. The main objective of RBDAs is the economic exploitation and management of land water resources of their respective areas of operation with particular but varying emphasis on the development of agriculture, fishing, human settlement, infrastructural facilities and industries as well as the improvement of their environment. Other programmes include Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Universal Basic Education (UBE) and the Green Revolution [17]. The Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) was enunciated in 1976 by General Obasanjo's military regime. The programme had the specific focus of increasing food production on the premise that availability of cheap food will raise the nutritional level of the ordinary Nigerian and invariably lead to high per capita income and improved standard of living. The Shagari regime came up with Green Revolution project, which also emphasized food production.
- ii. The SAP era: In 1986, the Federal Government introduced economic reforms, culminating in the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Although various initiatives embarked upon during

this era never dubbed poverty alleviation programmes, they nonetheless were transforming

livelihoods [17]. A summary of these programmes are shown in the table below.

Table 1: Government Anti-Poverty Programmes in Nigeria during the SAP era

Programme	Year	Target Groups	Nature of Intervention
Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI)	1986	Rural Areas	Feeder roads, Rural water supply and Rural electricity
National Directorate of Employment (NDE)	1986	Unemployed youth	Training, Finance, Guidance for youth employment
Better Life Programme (BLP)	1987	Rural women	Self –help and rural development programme, skill acquisition and health care
People’s Bank of Nigeria (PBN)	1989	Under privileged in rural and urban areas	Savings and credit scheme
Community Banks (CBs)	1990	Rural residents and micro-enterprises in urban areas	Banking services
Family Support Programme (FSP)	1994	Families in rural areas	Health care delivery, child welfare and youth development

Adopted from Osahon, [17]

Of all the SAP era poverty eradication programmes, DFRRI is the most comprehensive programme. It was introduced by Babangida administration (1985-1992). DFRRI sought to open up rural areas via construction feeder roads and provision of basic amenities that would turn them into production centers for the national economy. The establishment of National Directorate of Employment (NDE) on the other is certainly one of the indirect measures taken by the government to attack poverty in the society via creation of employment opportunities.

iii. The Democratic era: Nigeria’s re-emergence as a democratic state in 1999 provided the impetus for good governance aimed at addressing the needs of the poor and underprivileged. At the inception of the Obasanjo’s administration, government created the poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) aimed at promoting employment and mitigating the unemployment crises in Nigeria, which was fueled by two decades of economic recession that had underwined the private sector and reduced capacity utilization in the manufacturing sector to less than 30 percent.

Lack of success with PAP, spurred the federal government to embark on an elaborate anti-poverty initiative known as National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). NAPEP was established in 2001, with the goal of eliminating “core” poverty in ten years. As an ambitious development tool, NAPEP was

expected to provide strategies for the eradication of absolute poverty in Nigeria through the streamlining and rationalization of existing poverty alleviation institutions and coordinating implementation of relevant schemes and programmes. Under the initiative, 12 ministries were co-opted into NAPEP. These ministries are: Agriculture and Rural Development, Education, Water Resources, Power and Steel, Employment, Labor and productivity, Women Affairs and Youth Development, Health, Works and Housing, Environment, Finance and National Planning Commission. In addition, 9 agencies were also mandated to become part of NAPEP. They are as follows: Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative and Rural development Bank (NACRDB), Universal Basic Education (UBE), River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs), Small and Medium Industries Development Agency (SMIDA), Bank of Industry (BOI), Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Primary Health care Development Agency (NPHCDA) and Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN) (<http://nigerianguildofeditors.com>. Accessed on 23/04/2011).

NAPEP evolved four core schemes: The first is the Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), which is concerned with providing unemployed youth opportunities in skills acquisition, employment and wealth generation. The second is Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS). The objective of this scheme is to ensure the provision and development of

infrastructure needs in the areas of transportation, energy, water and communication especially in rural areas. The third is the Social Welfare Services Scheme (SOWESS) which aims at ensuring the provision of basic services including quality primary and special education, strengthening the economic power of farmers, providing primary health care, and so on. The last is the Natural Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS). The vision of this scheme is to bring about a participatory and sustainable development of agricultural, mineral and water resources.

POVERTY PROFILE IN NIGERIA 1999-2010

When Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999, people started jubilating thinking that their plight will improve particularly in terms of poverty reduction. The result was not all together positive. The Obasanjo's regime in an attempt to make Nigerians realize their dream introduced in May, 2004 the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). This was in response to development challenges of Nigeria. The goal of NEEDS according to Obasanjo is to mobilize the resources of Nigeria to make a break with the failures of the past.

Between 2004- 2007 Nigerians have assessed the NEEDS program and found it not to have made a fundamental break with the failures of the past. It is estimated that three quarters of the country's inhabitants live on roughly \$1 per day [11].

Though poverty cut across all parts of Nigeria, the rate is higher in the northern parts. According to National bureau of statistics, the poverty rate in the country now stands at 54 per cent, with northern parts of the country accounting for more than half the number; as most are said to be living in abject poverty. The MDG, report of 2005 showed that poverty is more acute in rural areas and that some geo-political zones are particularly harder hit than others by the phenomenon. States in northern part of the country use firewood as means of cooking the more, with Jigawa leading with a very high figure of 98.5 per cent closely followed by Kebbi and Yobe 98.1 per cent and 96.7 respectively. Lagos and Oyo formed the least with 1.1 per cent and 38.4 per cent respectively. The latter two states are however leading in the utilization of electricity, gas and kerosene as means of cooking. This is in contrast to states like Jigawa, which has only .9 per cent utilization of kerosene and a zero percent utilization of gas. (Weekly Trust, October 15-21:17).

In the same vein, Garba [9] found that 78% of the rural dwellers in Sokoto were living below the poverty line. The result of his findings further showed that 28% of rural dwellers were absolutely poor, living below \$1 per day.

It is obvious from the foregoing that poverty is more pervasive in the northern part than in other parts of the country. The poverty situation in the country as a whole is not very encouraging. It therefore suggests that Nigeria cannot talk of development going by Seers' fundamental question about development. The poverty situation in Nigeria affects other aspects like unemployment, which is one of the cardinal points of development. Employment opportunities in Nigeria are grossly inadequate. Nigeria is characterized by high rate of unemployment. The national unemployment rate estimate of the office of the statistics is not encouraging. Cases of retrenchment and redundancy are rampant in Nigeria. Policies put in place by government are more of rhetoric than real action. For example, money allocated to assist unemployed Nigerians through the National directorate of employment end up in the pockets of the managers of the agency. The situation at the National eradication is even worse (Leadership, October 9, 2005).

Similarly, the monetization policy, which was supposedly meant to cushion the effects of retrenchment, has woefully failed because workers were sacked without any thing to fall back on. The implications of unemployment are numerous. Unemployment leads to the feeling of deprivation and frustration, which serves as a necessary condition for aggression. Most unemployed people may perhaps be aggressive. Most actors in riots, armed robbery, theft etc. are unemployed and as rightly argued by Seers, any nation whose unemployment rate is on the increase cannot boost of development.

Apart from unemployment, poverty can widen the gap between the rich and the poor. Nigeria as a dependent capitalist nation is characterized by sharp inequality. Abdullahi [10] argued that looking at the lavish life style of some rich Nigerians, there is an unacceptable gap between the income of the very rich and those of the very poor.

It is necessary to re-emphasize certain facts. As stated earlier the Obasanjo administration's effort of reduction in poverty was slow in meeting the target set for 2015. The chronic nature of poverty in Nigeria shows that one can hardly call the result development. It is absolutely painful and frustrating when you realize the immense potentials of the country. Sixteen years is enough for any administration to sort out it basic problem (poverty).The effects of poverty on Nigeria's socio-political and economic development are myriad. The present administration has a lot to do especially in the areas of poverty and unemployment. Concerted efforts have to be geared toward realizing the Number 1 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

SHORTCOMINGS OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION INTERVENTIONS IN NIGERIA

It is obvious from the above review that from 1960 till date, no Nigerian government, be it military or civilian, has come without introducing and leaving behind one form of poverty reduction or alleviation programme meant to reduce the level of poverty, give hope and succor to the poor and, or move towards some sort of wealth creation. Strategies, policies and plans have been formulated and executed over these years. These programmes have been judged by scholars [18, 19] not to be satisfactory. In spite of all such previous government efforts at alleviating poverty in Nigeria, the incidence and severity of poverty has continued to pose formidable threats to the welfare of Nigerians and sustainable development of the country [23].

To this end, a myriad of problems has been identified as constraints on poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria. These include policy inconsistency, lack of effective mechanism for project monitoring, the ad hoc and non-integrated nature of most programmes, lack of accountability and probity in programme implementation, poor co-ordination of programmes, inadequate funding, to mention but a few of the factors responsible of the failed efforts aimed at poverty reduction in Nigeria.

To support this position, Chukwuemaka, [20] asserts that:

“There is no gainsaying that efforts made by the successive regimes and administrations in Nigeria to stamp out poverty failed due to poor implementation and incompatibility of policy goals”.

In line with the above, Khalid, [11] argued that the responsibility of various administrations to the poverty problem appears to have been ad-hoc and un-coordinated. He however acknowledged the fact that none of the programmes was completely without merit. He argued that none of them had significant, lasting or sustainable positive effects. To buttress his position, he outlined some of the major factors hindering the success of government efforts to reduce poverty, which include: poor coordination, the absence of comprehensive policy framework, ineffective targeting of the poor leading to leakage of benefits to unintended beneficiaries, overlapping of functions which led to institutional rivalry and conflicts, the absence of sustainability mechanisms in programmes and projects and lack of involvement of beneficiaries in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

In the same vein, Esemé [24] observed that corruption in government and neglect of target group—the poor, who were never considered during the

formulation of policies, is responsible for the failure of successive governments efforts aimed at poverty reduction in Nigeria. Similarly, Osahon and Owen [17] argued that the major reasons for the failure of many poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria have been marginalization of the poor in the conceptualization and management of such programmes.

Radda, [21] was however specific about the failure of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) where he asserts that:

“The advent of SAP in 1986 came with the policies and programmes to alleviate poverty and provide safety nets for the poor because of the unintended negative effects of structural adjustment policies on the society’s vulnerable groups. The structural adjustment had its negative effects on economic growth and lacked emphasis on development; it also increased socio-economic problems of income inequality, unequal access to food, shelter, education, health and other necessities of life thereby aggravating the incidence of poverty in the country”.

Commenting on Obasanjo’s efforts aimed at alleviating poverty, Eze, [22] contends that the government adopted a policy of poverty eradication and promotion of socio-economic development and at the same time pursued a policy of retrenchment of thousands of workers from the federal bureaucracy. This sounds ironical. The government is only paying lip service because the efforts are more of rhetoric than real action. You cannot claim to introduce policies aimed at alleviating and at the same embark on massive retrenchment. That is why the situation in Nigeria cannot be regarded as a development scenario because Dudley Seers had argued that there are three fundamental questions to be asked about the development of nation; these are: what happen to unemployment? What happen to inequality and what happen to poverty? All these variables in Nigeria are on the increase. Therefore, the result cannot be claimed to be development.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is clear from above that Nigeria does not need any new policy on development and chronic poverty, all it needs is seriousness in terms of the implementation of existing and past policies to address the chronic nature of the Nigerian poverty. Nigerians need to sit up with a view to address corruption in all its ramifications, which is the bane to Nigeria’s drive for development. Corruption in Nigeria is wide spread, which affects the effectiveness of poverty eradication policies and programmes. The targeted poor only get remnant of the cake. Those at the top corner what is

meant for the poor, which leads their condition to be chronic because of the persistence of poverty. The only way Nigeria could get out of the shackle of chronic poverty and by extension address its development challenges in general is to seriously fight corruption in all its ramifications and all corrupt elements should be brought to book. The present government's fight against corruption is commendable. However, justice and fair play should be the driving force as opposed to nepotism.

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