

The Menace of Poverty and the Challenges of Public Policy Making in Nigeria

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Received: October 1, 2015 Accepted: November 21, 2015 Online Published: January 26, 2016

doi:10.5539/jsd.v9n1p177

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/jsd.v9n1p177>

Abstract

This study contends that poverty is a global phenomenon and no nation is immune to the scourge it is capable of causing especially when determined and clear policy measures are not put in place to check the menace. The objectives that interrogates the nerves of this discourse is to assess the rate of poverty in Nigeria as well as examine the role of government in poverty eradication. Also, to identify the various initiatives that governments in Nigeria have put in place since the pre; through and the post Structural Adjustment Programme era of the nation. Findings from the study reveals that attitudinal response and approach of both the government and the governed is appalling. Also, there exist a sharp disconnect between the government and the governed which has resulted into policy formulations that fail to meet the yearning, demand and desire of the people. Meanwhile, it was established that political and policy instability, poor targeting mechanism and inadequate coordination among the existing three tiers of government have done harm to programme implementation. The paper makes contribution by providing information and it adopt secondary source of data gathering. It concludes by recommending strengthened relationship/ communication between the governments and the governed to ensure proper and adequate policies that will meet their targets are made as well as enforcement of initiatives of governments directed at reducing poverty.

Keywords: poverty, public policy, state, poverty eradication, development

1. Introduction

Poverty in Nigeria just like many other sub-Saharan African nations has been a worrisome and exasperate phenomenon. It is however paradoxical in a nation like Nigeria that is richly blessed in minerals. According to the Federal Ministry of Trade and Investment, mineral resources that are present in Nigeria include coal and tin. Other natural resources in the country are iron ore, limestone, niobium, lead, zinc, and arable land. Also, there is the abundance of natural gas, bitumen, limestone, coal, tin, columbite, gold, silver, lead-zinc, gypsum, glass sands, clays, asbestos, graphite, and iron ore, among others. While agricultural products include groundnuts, palm oil, cocoa, coconut, citrus fruits, maize, millet, cassava, yams and sugar cane. The nation also has a booming leather and textile industry (FMTI: 2015). However, regimes after regimes, both military and civilian have at different times initiated several intervention strategies both on short and long term basis to put in place machinery to combat the scourge through the policies and programme implemented, yet, the menace has not abated but kept on even more daring.

2. The Nigerian Situation

The World Bank (2011) asserts that Human Development Index (HDI) in 2011 puts Nigeria at 156th position among 177 countries as compared to the 151st position in 2002. Nigeria's Human Poverty Index (HPI) for 2009 was only 36.2% placing Nigeria at the 114th position and among the 7th poorest nations in the world while the ratio of the richest 10 percent to the poorest 10 percent was 16.3 with Gini index from 42.9 in 2004 to 44.7 in 2010 (National Bureau of Statistics - NBS, 2012; UNDP, 2013). Also, World Bank (2015) states that; "the fact is that two-thirds of the world's extreme poor are concentrated in just five countries: India, China, Nigeria, Bangladesh and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). If you add another five countries: Indonesia, Pakistan, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Kenya, the total grows to 80 per cent of the world's extreme poor." The World Bank ranked these countries based on their population and their share of the 1.2 billion extreme poor people in the world thus: India (33%), China (13%), Nigeria (7%), Bangladesh (6%), DRC (5%), Indonesia (4%), Pakistan

(3%), Tanzania (3%), Ethiopia (2%) and Kenya (1%). It thus establish that for the poor rating to be the lot of a country like Nigeria with so much mineral and natural resources is quite unfortunate and places a lot of questions on the management of the nation's resources especially since the oil boom era of the 1970s.

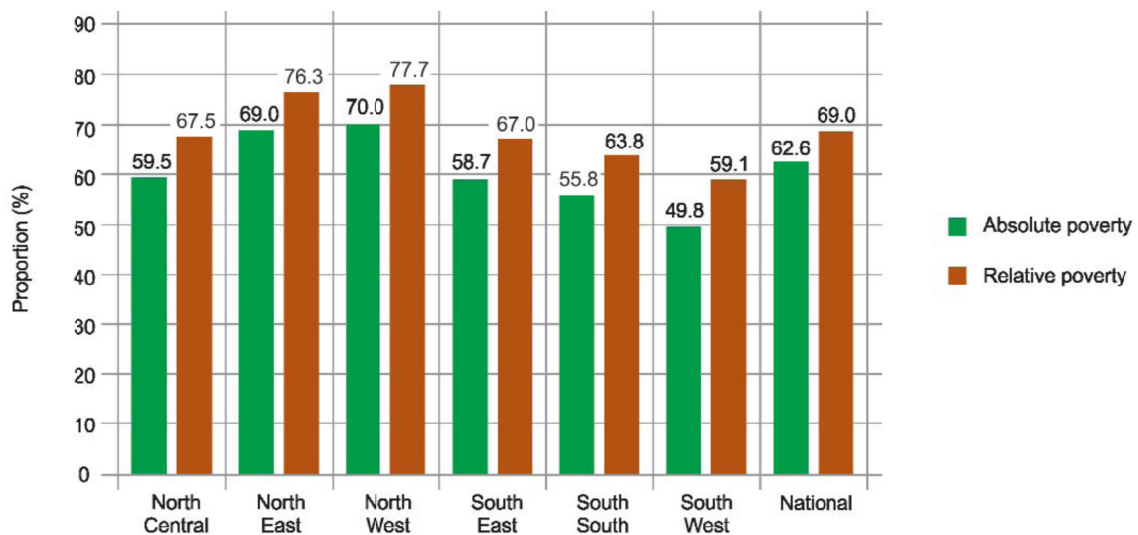
Table 1. Nigeria poverty profile

Indicator	1970	1992	1996	2004	2010	2015
1.1: proportion of population below USD 1 (PPP) per day (%)	NA	42.70	65.60	51.55	61.20	21.40
1.2: Poverty Gap Ratio (%)	32.10	NA	NA	29.60	NA	NA
1.3: Share of poorest quintile in national consumption (%)	5.0	5.10	5.10	5.90	5.50	NA

NA- Not applicable/ available

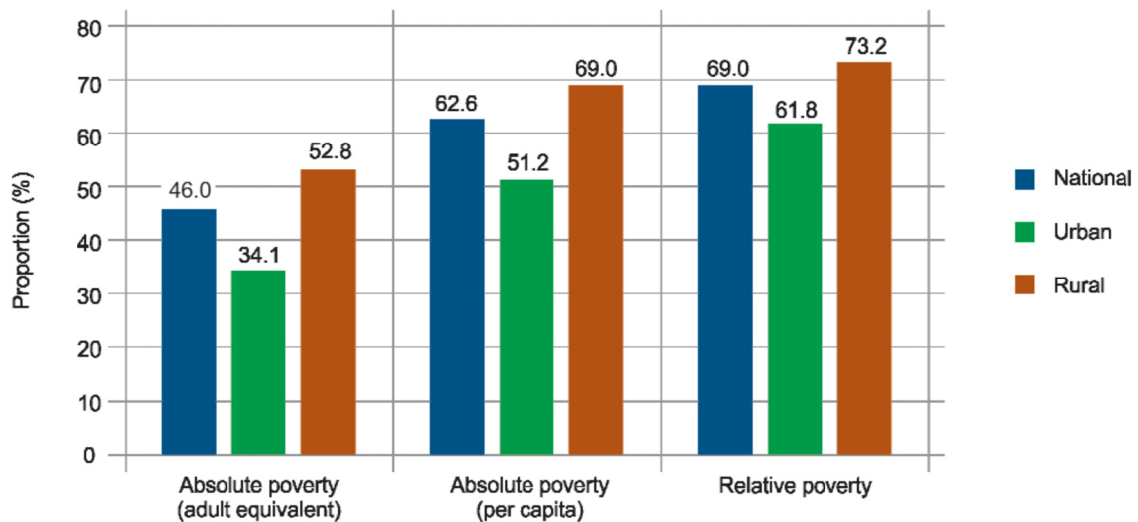
Source: NBS (2005); Nigeria MDGs Reports (various editions); MDGs Mid-Point Assessment Report (2007); MDG, 2012

Table 2. Poverty rates across geopolitical zones



Source: NBS (2013)

Table 3. Absolute and relative poverty – national, urban and rural (2010)



Source: NBS (2013)

The table 1 above shows the poverty profile of the Nigerian nation while table 2 exemplifies the poverty spread among the six politically recognized geo-political zones of the country, depicting poverty rate is higher in the North-West and North-East compared to what is obtainable in the South-West and South-South respectively. Table 3 shows the absolute and relative poverty level cutting across the national, urban and rural areas. It shows that poverty is more prevalent in the rural area compared to the situation in the urban areas. Meanwhile, it can be expressed that the high variability in the poverty rates across the country underscores the compelling need for well-targeted initiatives, strategies and programmes to tackle local economic challenges.

3.

3.1 Conceptualizing Poverty

With the current situation globally, poverty is more easily seen than defined. Across the globe, there are a large number of people who can hardly afford minimal essentials of life such as food, cloth, shelter and even basic primary health care. As far back as 1980s, the World Bank and the United Nation's Food and Agricultural Organisation estimated that the number of people living in poor condition as ranging between 700 million and 1 billion (The World Bank: 1995: cited in Yusuf, 2005). However in Nigeria, the World Bank indicates that over 45% of the country's population live below the poverty level while about two-third (2/3) of this group are extremely poor. Although, poverty is a global socio-economic challenge, the reaction of the political class to it turns out to affect every citizen of the various nations and continents only at varying degrees. The issue of poverty and those generated as its resultant consequences necessitated the millennium summit of the United Nations in the year 2000 where United Nations Millennium Declaration was adopted and all the 189 member states and over 20 international organizations present agreed and put eradicating extreme poverty and hunger as the number one goal to be achieved by year 2015. Unfortunately, Sub-Saharan nations are badly hit by poverty and governmental strategies geared towards coming out of the shackles remain at best mere cosmetic as evident in the lives of most of the citizenry.

Notably, most Sub-Saharan countries inherited the idea of the state as the engine of growth and development (Adamolekun, 2005: 12). It is quite important to state that though the roles can arguably be conceptualized as matching the role of capability; such that even weak states strive to get it right in areas like investing in people, infrastructure, protection of the vulnerable, a good foundation of law, a benign policy environment including macro and micro economic stability as well as protection of the natural environment and no doubt, the experience have left the nations with redefining roles and responsibilities of the state. According to UNDP (2005) more than one billion people in the world population live in extreme poverty, surviving on less than one dollar a day and also, the worlds' poor suffer from a lack of adequate shelter, health care, education, protection from violence and a voice in what happens in their environment. However, arising from the admittance of the threatening negative scourge of poverty as ultimate, it is safe to comment therefore that no nation of the world is immune to this deadly and dastard socio-economic challenge.

The thrust of the current Nigerian government economic policy objectives is to enable the poor and the more vulnerable sections of the society to achieve sustainable livelihood and to that extent, Section 16 sub-section (1) of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FGN: 1999) states that the state shall; within the context of the ideals and objectives for which provision are made; (a) harness the resources of the nation and promote national prosperity and an efficient, dynamic and self-reliant economy. It is however expected that governmental economic policies are to be directed towards achieving this target. This work shall look into the strategic relevance and importance of the state in eradicating poverty in the Nigerian context as well as how the programmes implemented have fared in the past few decades and lastly, this work will suggest workable steps and initiatives towards assisting policy makers achieve a better nation. From a social perspective, poverty means denial of choices and opportunities or a tolerable life and not merely in the impoverished state in which the person actually lives, but also in the lack of real opportunities while from psychological dimension it can be seen as that state that subsumes powerlessness, voicelessness, dependency, shame and humiliation due to social constraint as well as personal circumstances, (World Bank; 2000 and UNDP, 1997).

According to Afonja and Ogwumike (2003: 57) there is no objective definition of poverty and no objective way of measuring how many people are poor. Scholars have however attempted to give a generally acceptable definition for poverty variedly, and all as opined by Enwere (2003: 78) is summarily the lack of command over basic consumption needs and consumption needs referring to material needs such as food, cloth and housing among other basic necessities. It may refer to some intangible or socio-cultural goods such as freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of religion among others.

In the same vein, some plausible definitions according to Stein and Foss (1995) posit that three broad concepts of poverty exist, with the third one more recent and less used. The variances are: absolute poverty, relative poverty and subjective poverty. Absolute poverty is a situation where the life of a person or group is impaired by lack of or deficient access to basic physical and or socio-cultural goods. It is also defined by the approximate minimum, which refers to the maximum proportion of income that a family spends on certain subsistence goods. While relative poverty refers to how an individual or group lives vis-à-vis another individual or group within the same socio-economic environment or outside it. However, Enwere (2003: 78) simply compares the welfare of those in the lowest amount of resources with others in the society. Meanwhile, subjective poverty however requires individuals including the poor to really define what in their opinion they consider as minimum adequate standard of living. It can thus be viewed either in micro or macro perspective as well. Micro perspective conceives it as a phenomenon occurring at the level of individual or house hold when such is unable to have access to basic needs while macro perspective viewed it in terms of how the "average inhabitants" of a country or region live, below or above poverty lines.

3.2 Public Policy Defined

As opined by most scholars however, the starting point is that public policy is the study of policy-making by governments. Birklandop (2001: 21) and Ajayi (2008: 28) states that a government's public policy is the set of policies (laws, plans, actions and behaviour) that it chooses. As espoused by Agagu (2010: 9) public policy is a relatively new sub-field in political science. It is however important to emphasize that public policy as an area of study emerged out of the recognition that traditional analysis of government decisions were incomplete descriptions of political activities. Cochran, *et al* (2009: 1) avers that even though examples of public policy come readily to mind, defining public policy in clear and unambiguous terms is not easy. The term always refers to the actions of government and the intentions that determine those actions. Schutz (2004) opines that it is used not only to describe that process and its consequences, but also the general set of tools and mechanisms through which these choices are made. Whether it be by fiat, legislative voting, administrative rule making, public assent, or default, the ways that choices are made in the interest of the people is an important aspect of the public policy process. From indications, public policy focuses on the 'public' problems requiring actions as the output produces the type of governance in a nation.

However, emphasis seem that public policy usually is the sum of government activities, whether acting directly or through her agents to influence the lives of the citizenry usually containing decisions of government's resolution on what it will and what it will not, consisting of political decisions that goes in line with political will and implementing programmes to achieve societal goals. In the same vein, public policy decision making according to Micheals (2004) is the actions taken within governmental settings to formulate, adopt, implement, evaluate or change. And according to Anderson (1975) the core characteristics of public policy are purposive or goal oriented action rather than random or chance behaviour, as things do not just happen in modern day political system, it consists of courses or patterns of action by governmental officials rather than their separate discrete decisions. It is what government actually do in regulating activities, not what they intend to do or say they are

going to do and it can be either positive or negative (it is positive when the action of government affects a particular problem, notably, it is based on law and it is authoritative while it is negative when government decides not to take any action).

In another swift, Cochran (2009: 8) observes that the development of a public policy begins with public recognition that a problem exists. He listed the three pre-policy stage to include; (i) problem definition or issues formations, (ii) policy demand, and (iii) agenda formation. Following the pre-policy stages, the next major stage in the development of a public policy is deliberation and policy adoption. From the policy agenda, decision makers, with the input of several groups, policy expert and constituents' debate and bargain over alternative policy formulations, settling on an alternative or a combination of alternatives to respond to the problem. After this, decisions are made, policies are formulated, and policy statements are issued, taking such forms as orders, regulations or law.

3.3 Poverty, Public Policy and the State

The concept of poverty in relation to governance challenges and policy objectives is predicated upon the major assumption that there is lack and subsequently there is the need for growth and development. The thrust of the current Nigerian government policy against poverty is to enable the poor and more vulnerable sections of the society to achieve sustainable livelihoods. Of note, there is the required flow of public policies which have been made in the past and even in recent times. However, efforts made by government to address poverty appear to be mere cosmetic in approach and unfortunately reducing it remains in anticipation or at best mere theoretical. Policymakers are faced with the challenge of legislating against the problem, thus, it is expected that drastic and purposeful initiatives that will bring about solutions as well as programmes aimed and geared towards eliminating or reducing the deadly scourge be introduced and fully implemented. The challenge of the menace therefore has become increasingly daring and obviously it is not limited to individuals, households, groups or communities alone but the entire human race.

The attitudinal response and approach of the Nigerian government towards reducing poverty without any gainsaying is appalling. Government has not showed serious commitments to ensuring proper execution of policies to bring about the desired results, yet the citizenry look up to the government, and as they are so expectant, inertia, opaqueness and lip service are flagrantly displayed in the execution of the policies and despite the warnings by international groups and organizations, government remains un-delivering. This informed the submission of Agagu (2011:157) that:

...there is no gainsaying the fact that public policies have not achieved the desired goals in Nigeria. Over the years, the governments at all levels have come up with development plans and the strategies to attain them... public policy is expected to articulate and translate the citizens' demand into government intentions to be transformed into services.

Following that a state is a duly constituted set of representatives of an organized society of human beings created by them for their mutual protection and well-being, one major function of the state is that of caring for those of its citizens who find themselves as victims of adverse circumstances that make them unable to obtain even the necessities of mere existence without the aid of others. Coming from social contract theory background, according to Hobbes (1651), Locke (1689) and Rousseau (1754) respectively, the state came into being either by agreement or as the voluntary task of the people, not by fiat and the people come together and surrendered their natural liberty and chose a leader. The major theme holds that government is a sort of agreement between the people and the government and to the proponents of the theory in its earliest form, man lived in a "state of nature" in which they were subject only to such regulations as nature was supposed to prescribe as there was no human authority to formulate rules precisely or to enforce them. Thus, no government existed and each individual man was only as secure as his own power and mental awareness could make him. Men thereafter surrendered his rights and conceded it to enter into agreement. However, the theory gives certain right, privileges and responsibilities to both the citizens and government of states.

In modern conception, as provided by Harold Laski (1974 cited by Appadorai, 1975: 40-41) the responsibility of the state is to assist multitude of men realize social good on the largest possible scale as well as maintaining law and order to provide all things that will engender good living conditions and ensure rule of law as well as the attainment of individual rights and social good that will take care of the scourge of poverty. In what Bentham (1952) and Mill (1933) in the theory of utilitarianism referred to as creating the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people at all times. Appadorai (1974: 42) submits that the theme of utilitarianism is that every men desire happiness, which is surplus of pleasure over pain, as pleasure and pain remain the main springs of

human action, and following this, the central point is that responsibility for advance living in the state is on the government. Anderson (1989 cited by Hughes, 1995) provided seven basic and essential functions of government which are:

- 1) Providing economic infrastructure: basic institutions, rules and arrangements necessary, provision of standard currency, weight and measures etc
- 2) Provision of various collective goods and services: once provided for one, they are available for all e.g. national defence, roads and bridges, flood control, sewage, disposal among others
- 3) Resolution and adjustment of group conflicts
- 4) Maintenance of healthy economy through regulation of businesses
- 5) Protection of natural resources
- 6) Provision for minimum access by individuals to the goods and services of the economy (welfare and poverty alleviation measures)
- 7) Stabilization of the economy through budgets, monetary policy or control over wages or prices.

The essence of the state is to improve the welfare of the people it is expected that any rational step taking as a result of well formulated policy should be given chance to thrive. It is therefore not surprising that at the centre of any serious minded development policy debate engaged in by government, poverty-focused themes usually (re)emerge and take centre stage.

The state (government and governed) as a matter of fact in most sub-Saharan nations, is viewed as a problem-solving mechanism and thus, its policies are expected to be deliberate actions-decisions geared towards reacting promptly to the problems that may arise in the society. In view of this, it is expected that government possess the strength, versatility, vigour and political will to eliminate the menace of poverty. Though, Utomi (2011: 70) states that the cost of ignorance on poverty for both the government and the governed, he asserts that;

Poverty feeds on lack of knowledge and the absence of the social will to recognize that it can be eliminated. It is clear that given the tragedy of the commons embedded in government action... the impact of policy choices in the private and public sectors as they affect the human condition, the society have a major role to play.

Thus, the process though all-inclusive places more responsibility on leadership of the state with task of preparing, analyzing, implementing and evaluating the stages of development initiatives to ensure every sector of the nation is properly informed and carried along. The variables that are necessary to be considered however include: policy resources, policy standards, communications, enforcement, and disposition of the implementers, characteristics of the implementing agencies, political environment, and economic and social conditions (Agagu, 1995: Van Horn and Van Meter, 1977).

Meanwhile, Agagu, (2010) identifies some factors that are usually considered in determining the policy needed by the public at any particular time to include but not limited to the philosophy of government, political will, the stakeholders, financial and economic valuation of policies, international dimensions/ considerations, problem identification (contagious influence), past public policies and most importantly public interest. In all of these, the state shoulders the responsibility of assisting the citizens to achieve optimum self-dignity, integrity and maximum economical/ financial independence as much as possible.

4.

4.1 Efforts at Eradicating Poverty in Nigeria

In the quest for national growth and improved society cum development, the efforts by the various governments of the country geared towards poverty eradication according to Ijaiya (2007: 479) could be grouped into three stages, that is, the pre SAP era that witnessed the period of programmes such as Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), the River Basin Development Authority (RBDA), the Agricultural Development Programme, the Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme and the Green Revolution. While the SAP era had programmes such as the Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures, the National Directorate of Employment, the Better Life Programme, the People's Bank, the Community Banks, and the Family Support Programme, and lastly, the democratic era; that saw to the introduction of Poverty Alleviation Programme that was subsequently phased out and fused into the National Poverty Eradication Programme, also, National Economic Empowerment and

Development Strategy (NEEDS), Vision 2010 and Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme, as well as the ongoing vision 20:20:20 strategy plans.

In line with the various plans, policies, initiatives and attempts by governments, non-government organizations as well as individuals to reduce poverty as described by Ogwumike (2001), more attention has been focused on economic growth, basic needs and rural development strategies. With the economic growth approach, attention is focused on rapid economic growth as measured by growth rate in real per capita, GDP or per capita natural income, price stability and declining unemployment among others. The basic needs approach focuses attention on the basic necessities of life such as food, health care, education, shelter, clothing, transport, water sanitation among others. It must be noted that poverty is not restricted to any particular sector of the economy. It is a major development problem to the extent that it has economy-wide causes and consequences which cannot be eradicated through hurriedly prepared *ad hoc* programmes, thus advocating for development strategies. Imodu (1999) opines that there are many perceptions of poverty as it is relative to people, country, context, developmental approaches and national wealth distribution. Though, classical definitions are traditionally those of relative deprivation such as physical, economic and socio-psychological among others. In this however, as the discussion has been all along in this chapter, the state is expected to interfere and bring to the barest minimum the challenges as well as assist the citizens to develop.

Another perspective, according to Obadan, (1996) is that two distinct approaches to poverty alleviation have featured prominently in Nigeria's national development plans and these are: economic growth strategy that presumes the trickling down of the benefits of growth to the poor and the strategy of rural/ infrastructural development. However, the centre piece of the rural development policy has been agricultural development, complemented by social and economic infrastructure. While Ajakaye and Olomola (2003) opine that a properly articulated and carefully planned development strategy in which poverty reduction is brought into the mainstream in all domains of development and public policy should be preferred to sporadic and episodic responses in different strata of the society. Thus, it is worrisome that despite the resources committed into the various programmes, the nation keeps recording high incidences of poverty year in year out. The present situation in Nigeria is aptly described by Agagu (2011) when he submits that:

Nigeria cannot feed her citizens, just as it is economically and socially backward. The country's level of indebtedness and poverty has reached such alarming state that it has become one of the poorest countries in the world. In spite of the heavy annual budgets at all levels of government over the years, the condition of life of all the masses have not shown any remarkable improvement.

From the foregoing analysis of the national life, it is suffice to opine that the state's intervention has not achieved neither has it produced much results in resolving the daunting challenge that the social menace of poverty has put at the doorstep of policy and decision makers. Further the line however, it behoves on us to ask whether the policies are pro-poor or pro-development and whether the state is really interested in eradicating poverty. Another question to be asked is whether the policies being used are the appropriate ones.

These questions will agitate one's mind because it is disappointing to see that not much has been achieved as the people in the rural areas remain perpetually poor and those in the urban areas are not faring any better despite all the various initiatives. Unfortunately as evidently seen in the approaches to poverty alleviation as expressed in the various fundamental objectives of the nation's development plans, the poor were implicitly expected to benefit from the "trickle-down efforts" of the overall process of development, but this has not been the case as the rate of poverty remains on the high side and the collapse of the various programmes with little success in their mandates notwithstanding points to the ineffectiveness of the strategies and programmes. This will therefore take us to the next sub-chapter that takes care of some the reasons responsible for the failure of the interventions and initiatives.

4.2 Reasons for Policy Failure in Nigeria

There is no gainsaying the fact that policies so far initiated have not addressed the issue of poverty eradication. It is thus expedient to look at the general reasons for the failure of the government initiatives at various times both in past and present. The first factor is traceable to political and policy instabilities as a result of frequent government and policy changes and inconsistencies that follow thereafter. This has in no small measure caused the shamble and unsuccessful implementation of policies which in turn have retarded growth and development. Following Agagu, (2010: 5) understanding the problem of public policy instability in Nigeria starts from appreciating that public policy is a process that is propelled, nurtured, rationalized and clothed by the type of politics in a given state.

Another factor is poor targeting mechanism and inadequate coordination of the various programmes by government institutions. This has resulted in carrying out activities with resultant duplication of efforts. These overlapping functions ultimately lead to institutional rivalry and crisis which in turn does not favour the poor. Corruption, lack of transparency, accountability management and governance problems have affected most of the programmes resulting in policies and programmes not wholly implemented and facilities not being completed, broken down and or abandoned. In the long run, the programmes serve as conduit pipe for draining national resources. Inappropriate programme design and planning traceable to non-involvement of the direct beneficiaries in the formulation and implementation stages.

Policies are either imported or imposed by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and other donor International agencies as the case may be. Consequently, beneficiaries are not usually motivated to identify themselves sufficiently with the various programmes. Lastly, the absence of effective collaboration and complementation among the three tiers of government has not helped in the area of programme implementation and has adversely affected the strategies. The nation suffers from problems arising from policy co-ordination and this has led to or caused poor harmonization of national goals. Institutions and the public alike are faced with unclear target settings of ministries, agencies and parastatals which have resulted in resources being spread too thinly on too much.

4.3 Towards Ensuring the Effectiveness of Poverty Eradication Strategies

Poverty rate in Nigeria is startlingly scary, and according to Kpakol, in a public lecture in 2008 entitled “Poverty Solution: the role of Government in Poverty Eradication”, the number of poor Nigerians could be put at 54 million today (2008) from the 20 million in 1980 and further gave the breakdown of poverty in Nigeria along the six regional zones as 72.2% north-east, 26.7% south-east, 31.5 % south-south, 43.1% south-west, 67.0% in north-central and north-west with 71.2% (cited in Ojo, 2012). With the rising cases of poverty in Nigeria therefore, there is the need to fine-tune the existing policies on poverty. However, suggestions for an enhanced and improved policy implementation include but not limited to: (i) Integrating the policies into a holistic programme and carefully target the poor in the country as major beneficiaries of the policies thereby ensuring the participation of the poor to avoid cynicism and apathy. (ii) Foster an enhanced policy continuity mechanism/scheme, essential not for good impact alone but for the betterment of the citizenry and the government to ensure careful implementation, monitoring and reviewing stages of the policies in relation to their objectives. (iii) Proper coordination that will involve all the tiers of government as partners is not negotiable to ensure the various policies touches all the nooks and crannies of the nation (iv) Also, the need for adequate funding is essential to ensure quality service; and (v) there is the urgent need for effective training and capacity building for personnel who must have been appropriately recruited for various governmental intervention schemes.

5. Conclusion

A government and or people without a definite policy are like a traveler without a destination who may cover many miles and yet not be able to say where he is going or how far he has gone. Though, with all the plethora of policies initiated overtime it is demeaning for a country like Nigeria that prides herself as the giant of Africa to still have such a high level incidence of poverty to deal with. However, the case at improving and triumphing is not fore closed. The nation must therefore rise up and chase out the scourge and dilemma using the human and natural resources bequeathed to it. Also, the effort and contribution of all and sundry are required as the fight must be beyond lip service, but attitudinal change which this study strongly advocates for.

Notably, it is suffice to state that there is a disconnect between the policymakers and the people especially in the area of initiatives that have to do with poverty eradication. No wonder the value of life keep reducing and despite the efforts at reducing poverty the widening gap between the poor and the rich keep increasing.

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