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THE GOLDEN JUBILEE (1960-2010) OF NIGERIA'S INDEPENDENCE: AN ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS.

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## **The 50th Anniversary of Nigeria's Independence, Political Leadership and Poverty in the midst of Plenty:**

Problems, Priorities, Progress and Prospects

*Since 1st October 1960 that Nigeria got independence from the United Kingdom, she has experimented with diverse political systems - parliamentary, unitary, military, presidential and diarchal styles to boost peoples' welfare, still majority are poor. This paper examines Nigeria's income and human poverty, while indicating her citizens' priorities that political leaders failed to address. It accounts for the progress achieved and the prospects in fighting poverty in Nigeria. The country's growing unemployment, underemployment, low remuneration, weak savings and investments, corruption, short access to basic services coupled with the 64.4% people, who survive on less than US\$1.25 in 2000-2007 attest to her poverty in the midst of plenty. These pathologies accrued from bad governance, weak economic policies, plans, implementation and non-commitment of private organizations. The ongoing Nigeria's democratic institutionalization sends hope to people. Nigeria needs collective participation of all development's stakeholders to drag in good political leadership, as a developmental tool.*

Leadership poverty-stricken, Collective responses, Development, Nigeria.

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## INTRODUCTION

The political history of Nigeria expresses that prior to her colonisation by the United Kingdom (UK), a number of ethnic nations, linguistic divisions, economic actors, cultural groups and religious sects operated as separate political, social and geographical entities in the country. The country, Nigeria is located in West Africa and bordered by old French colonies; Niger Republic in the north, Benin Republic in the west, Republic of Cameroon in the east and Chad Republic in the northeast, including Atlantic Ocean in the south (Ojo, Ologe & Ezechukwu, 1999). Nigeria got independence from Britain on 1st October, 1960 and became a Republic 3 years later - on 1st October, 1963. She has been the most populous nation in Africa for years. The 2006 Housing and Population Census revealed that 140,431,790 (males =71,345,488 and females =69,086,302) million people lived in the country (National Population Commission of Nigeria, 2009). The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNDESA (2010), reported that as at mid-2010, Nigeria has 158.26 million people, out of which immigrants occupied, 1.13 million (0.7%). Against this figure, the country, Nigeria accounts for about half of the entire people of West Africa and one-sixth of African population. Approximately, 48% of Nigerian population lived in urban areas, while most Nigerian cities housed more than 100,000 inhabitants. The country is blessed with variety of customs, languages and traditions. Not less than 389 ethnic groups made up Nigeria, which invariably defined her rich cultural identities.

For the past 49 years that Nigeria escaped from British colonial hegemony, she has experimented with diverse political systems; parliamentary, unitary, military, presidential and diarchal styles (Wilmot, 2007). The indigenous political leadership in Nigeria begins with the First Republic (1960-1966), which was headed by Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Prime Minister, while Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe served as the Governor-General, representing the Queen of England. Azikwe became a ceremonial President in 1963, when Nigeria acquired the status of a republic. Balewa's regime was terminated, when a group of young military officers plotted coup d'état that led to loss of lives of key political leaders, Balewa, Prime Minister, Ahmadu Bello, Premier of Northern Nigeria and Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola, Premier of Western Nigeria. This event ushered in the First Military regime, which started from January, 1966 to July, 1966 under the leadership of General J. T. U. Aguiyi-Ironsi, while the Second Military era was led by General Yakubu Gowon from July, 1966 to June, 1975. General Murtala Muhammad served as the Third Military Head of State from June, 1975 to February, 1976; however, he was assassinated on 13th February, 1976 (Crowder, 1979; Uwechue, 1991). As a result, his deputy General Olusegun Obasanjo continued till 1st

October, 1979, when he handed over to Alhaji Shehu Aliyu Shagari, a democratically elected Executive President. The emergence of Shagari marks the beginning of Nigeria's Second Republic (1979-1983). In December, 1983, a bloodless military coup was staged. The coup brought in Major General Muhammadu Buahari, whose tenure lasted from December, 1983 to August, 1985. Buhari became the Fourth Military Head of State. General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida came into power, as the Fifth Military Head of State after a successful coup in August, 1985 (Abdulrahman, 1996; Uwechue, 1991). After conducting a free and fair presidential election on 12th June, 1993 that was presumed to have been won by Chief Moshood Abiola, General Babangida annulled the result. This led to intense local and international public outcries, killings, maiming, insecurity of lives and properties across the country. Worst are the threats from Abiola's supporters, who called for secession of Yorubas from Nigeria. Perhaps, these pressures among other hidden factors forced Babangida to relinquish power to Chief Ernest Shonekan his Head of Government in August, 1993 (Fasheun, 2002). In November, 1993, General Sani Abacha took over the mantle of leadership from Shonekan, who was the Head of Interim National Government, but Abacha died, while in power in June, 1998. The death of Abacha signals the end of the Sixth Military Regime in Nigeria. Thereafter, General Abdul-Salami Abubakar became the Head of State. As the Head of the Seventh Military Regime, Abubakar planned and administered smooth transition to civil rule in less than a year and handed power to Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the democratically elected President on 29th May, 1999 (Amadu, Olabisi, & Adetanwa, 2003). Having exhausted 2 terms in office (29th May, 1999 to 29th May, 2007), as Nigeria's President, Obasanjo transferred power in May, 2007 to Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'adua, a democratically elected President, but Yar'adua died on 5th May, 2010. This gave the Vice President, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan the chance to continue after several controversies. The 49 year-old leadership styles and experiences gained account for the contemporary Nigerian political administrative structures.

The political structure of Nigeria is characterised by 774 Local Government Authorities (LGA), 360 Federal House of Representative Constituencies, 109 Senatorial Zones, 36 States and 1 Federal Capital Authority known as Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. As part of the geo-political set up of Nigeria, the country is divided into 6 regional zones; North-West, North-Central, North-East, South-West, South-South and South East. The construction of the political edifice above is often associated to the political leaders' interest in fostering Nigeria's development. In other words, every new government that surfaced in the political landscape of Nigeria tasked her supporters to always inform the masses that each restructuring, which is being

undertaken has as its' object provision of infrastructural facilities and welfare services to the people. On the contrary, more than half of Nigerians are still living in poverty. Lynch (2003) posits that most of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries' (OPEC) members, especially Nigeria that usually experience frequent change of governments and leaders chase after large revenues. Thus, Nigeria always engage in the production and distribution of large quantity of oil with a view to upgrade national economic performance, fight financial constraints and glorify the dividend of democracy, while suffering from increasing populations and abnormal social spending that future oil proceeds can hardly cover. Yet, the future prospects of Nigerians that lived in poverty remained bleak, as the political leaders are working on what to spend, when and how in marking the 50th anniversary of Nigeria's independence achieved.

## NIGERIA'S INCOME AND HUMAN POVERTY: 50 YEAR-OLD PROBLEMS AND PEOPLE'S PRIORITIES

The Federal Government of Nigeria under the leadership of Prime Minister, Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa<sup>1</sup> embraced the idea of revenue generation by exporting large quantity of agricultural products, cash crops – cocoa, palm oil, rubber, groundnuts, cotton, including hides and skins (Ranald, 1974). The proceeds were used for national development; infrastructures, health and education. During Balewa's regime, especially when independence was achieved in 1960, only 15% of Nigerians were reported to be defined as poor people. The expectation is that poverty rate should continue to diminish, as the nation's revenues increased, particularly, when oil begins to add value to her economy, but the rate has been fluctuating. The first and most important obstacle that served as a drawback to smooth nation building and poverty reduction during Balewa's term was the resurgence of the ethnic, regional and religious sentiments that polluted the political geography of pre-independence Nigeria (Crowder, 1979; Uwechue, 1991). Therefore, as the country continually experienced increase in revenues, the volume of those defined as poor people steadily grew. For example, over \$200 billion is realised from the exploitation of oil resources in Nigeria between 1970 and 1996, but its mismanagement, lack of foresight on the possible future decline in oil prices, increased in public expenditures on capital intensive projects with external loans mess up the country's economy and subsequently compounded Nigeria's poverty level

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<sup>1</sup> He is the leader of a political party, Northern People's Congress (NPC) and the first Prime Minister of Nigeria, who laid the root of parliamentary leadership style. Balewa was killed during the 15th January, 1966's military coup d'état that was led by Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu, but General Aguiyi-Ironsi, the then most senior army took over government that lasted for months, before a counter-coup d'état ushered in Lt. Col Yakubu Gowon in July, 1966.

(World Bank, 1996). This glaring political administrative short-sightedness are characterised most political leaders' regimes in the country.

The absence of foresight on the possibilities of decline in oil prices is demonstrated, as Nigeria witnessed oil boom in 1970's. Consequent upon the rise in the prices of oil at the global level, the country's exports were boosted from N4 billion in 1975 to N26 billion in 1980, while the nation's GNP per capita shot up from \$360 to more than \$1,000. It is sad to say that these economic yields failed to impact positively on the lives of millions of Nigerians from 1985 to date. Specifically, the 1980's economic recession in world oil market did not only deflect the nation's export revenues, but also reduced her GNP per capita to \$370 in the 1980's (Garba, 2006). This signifies low economic growth; indeed increase in the number of poor people in Nigeria, but many Nigerians in different academic and public spheres continue to allege Europe and colonialism for the economic woes and poor human development index of the country.

Undoubtedly, the location and over-focusing of the issue of poverty on income, indeed economic structure at the expense of other dimensions of poverty, such as basic services constitutes a grievous bane to its estimation and reduction (Satterthwaite, 2004). This is because the accuracy of figures given in relation to the proportion of poor people in Nigeria is incredible. As this pattern of marginalised truths dominate Nigeria's theory and practice of poverty studies, the prospects of poverty alleviation stands to remain elusive in the country. The limitations reside in the neglect of peoples' inaccessibility to portable, safe, drinkable water, adequate health facilities, educational opportunities, balanced diet, safe environment, decent housing, human rights protection, political and religious freedom, peace, security of lives and properties among other non-economic variables in most institutional records on poverty rate in Nigeria. What is more, the non-inclusion of basic services in defining, scaling, analysing and combating poverty in Nigeria has been one of the missing links in most social policies, plans and programmes that are instituted against the increasing rate of poverty in the country.

In addition, most researches' failed to consider geographical difference, like the gaps among rural, sub-urban and urban poor people, while collecting and analysing data about poverty reduction in Nigeria. This lacuna is a great minus to the understanding of the process of fighting poverty in Nigeria. The results of several studies have shown that any inquiry that lacks these realities stands to miss out in its definitions, measurements, analyses and management of poverty, particularly urban poverty (Mitlin, 2005; Satterthwaite, 2004; Wratten, 1995). These methodological deficiencies extend to a quite number of advanced and developing areas, but Nigeria's

case is peculiar. The peculiarity of Nigeria lies on the open friction between her endowed rich resources and majority of her inhabitants that are wallowing in income and human poverty (Ahmad & Singh, 2003; World Bank, 1996). Even, most studies that claimed to have analysed the economic aspect of poverty revealed to the global community that the geo-political entity known as Nigeria exists in a paradoxical world; richness and poverty. This of course expresses that misconceptions of poverty by researchers and administrators in Nigeria have evidently left mutilated historical account in poverty management in the country.

Worst still, none of the past and present findings from income-oriented poverty inquiries and records yield any positive result in addressing poverty in the midst of Nigeria's plenty human and material resources. This laxity accrued from relatively inability of political administrators of poverty reduction programmes to engage in down-to-earth application of the results and recommendations gotten from one-sided inquiries, while formulating policies, designing plans and launching programme related to poverty alleviation in Nigeria. For instance, Fada (2008) expresses that in many parts of Nigeria, substantial numbers of people hardly access portable, safe and drinkable water supply and their weak access to this basic life supplement often mutilate their healthy living. While writing on urban Sokoto, Nigeria Shamaki & Dankani (2008) identified people's inability to access health care services as part of the indicators of poverty and Abdulrahim & Abubakar (2008) linked non affordability of many Nigerians to decent housing as an ingredient of urban poverty. Owing to the disheartening trends and nature of poverty in Nigeria, the United Nations Development Programme's human poverty index of 1999 placed Nigeria amongst the 25 poorest nations in the world (UNDP, 1999). Frankly speaking, if sound indices of income and human poverty are considered in UNDP's ranking of poor countries, Nigeria is likely to fall among the 10 poorest nations in the world alongside her neighbour, Republic of Niger.

Among the problems that have been militating against hitch-free poverty reduction in Nigeria is dearth of adequate data on the actual number of people that are living below the international standard of poverty-line of US\$1-US\$2 per day. Specifically, this yardstick is not effective in understanding and addressing poverty in an extended family household, where the breadwinner has 5-15 dependents. This pattern of household arrangement is common in Nigeria. What is more, Nigerian-oriented economic, political, demographic, educational irregularities, poor transparency, lack of maintenance culture, absence of checks and balances, mass supply of sub-standard goods and services, inter-ethnic and religious conflicts, self-centred leaders and docile followers, including lopsided analysis of colonialists'

exploitations are few of the forces aggravating poverty rate in the 50 year-old postcolonial Nigeria. It is true that Europe contributed towards the impoverishment of many African countries, including Nigeria in the colonial period (Rodney, 1972), but it is also certain that the indigenous political leaders have substantially impoverished millions of Nigerians via corrupt practices (Ekeanyanwu, Loremikan, & Ikubaje, 2004). Besides, there are instances, where former colonies, like Angola, Botswana, Cameroun, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, Ghana, Lesotho, Libya, Mauritania, South Africa, among others are doing better, while the so-called Giant and Heart of Africa, Nigeria is crawling among comity of nations. The reality is that instead of the political leaders and other indigenous social worms that have been sucking Nigeria's resources to be pointing accusing finger on Europe and international development partners for the country's backwardness, need arises for the Nigerians to focus in understanding and deactivating their internal lapses, while creating and adopting hybrid poverty eradication models.

Against this background, the priorities of Nigerian populace vegetate around easy accessibility to basic services, especially adequate balanced diets, portable and drinkable water, decent housing and accommodations, well-equipped health care services, adequately trained security and safety personnel. Most Nigerians are equally yearning for infrastructural facilities, such as improved road, rail, air and water transportation systems, including effective and affordable telecommunication network, constant power supply, adequate learning and teaching materials across all levels in educational institutions (nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary), improved sewage and drainage systems. Other aspects of the needs, indeed priorities of Nigerians, which the government failed to address centre around better remunerations (salaries and wages) and conditions of services.

Furthermore, poor people's priority that Nigerian political leaders and their governments are yet to address is the denial of poor people access to paid jobs, regular consultations and meetings with the leaders regarding what should be done for the development of their societies, why, when and how to do them. It is part of the priorities of the masses to be briefed about the progress or otherwise in their communities. Most often, majority of the masses, indeed destitute that actively participated in campaigning and voting activities for political aspirants always expect compensations from these political office holders. During festivities, most poor people desire to be receiving special gifts and presence from the political leaders within their areas. The health and environmental concern, which the poor people have been praying political leaders to manage are their exposure to biological pathogens, chemical pollutants, physical hazards, dangers of increased usage of non-renewable

resources and rising degradation of non-renewable resources, like soil, fresh water, including biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste generation that have aggravated urban poverty. These ingredients of poverty often accrued from the consumption styles of middle-income and upper-income urbanites, including the failures of government to apply policies against environmental hazards (Satterthwaite, 2003).

As Nigeria moves to clock and celebrate her 50 years of independence achieved (October 1st, 1960 to October 1st, 2010), 3 times presidential contestant and a former military head of state in Nigeria, Buhari<sup>2</sup> (2010, p. 2) argues that for the past 10 years that Nigeria claims to be practicing democracy, the situation has been that of "... a depressing story of a democracy without democrats, and of elections without the electorate". Perhaps, these and many political and electoral anomalies are impetus for the approval of N87.6 billion by the National Assembly for Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct 2010 General Elections, but most Nigerians are not convinced as to why elections need to be held, when they lacked access to their basic social needs; better foods, decent shelter, and moderate wears. Meanwhile, Nigeria is set out to spend not less than N10 billion in celebrating her Golden Jubilee Independence Anniversary in October 1st, 2010, while more 50% of her population is wallowing in income poverty and perhaps more than 75% of her inhabitants are vegetating on human poverty. In response to the institutional administrative shortsightedness above, many questions keep on ranting the air across diverse quarters in Nigeria. Why would the Federal government embark on the project of celebrating 50 years of independence, seeing that many citizens are recycling on various aspects of poverty; low income, weak housing, inadequate health care, insecurity, hunger, poor nutrition, water shortage, ill education, low-rated job, ridiculous remuneration, bad transportation system, exorbitant and ineffective communication services, inequality in wages, wealth and opportunities?

## NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT AND POVERTY ERADICATION: THE 50 YEAR-OLD SUCCESS STORY

The starting point of discourse on the nexus between Nigerian Government and poverty reduction resides with the overview of few international poverty reduction

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<sup>2</sup> He contested for Presidential seat twice (2003, and 2007). Buhari is a Presidential aspirant under the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) in the forthcoming 2011 General Election. He is popularly revered by northern Nigerian masses, but he lacked aristocratic supports. Buhari's high-handedness, when he was the Military Head of State and his relative recent identification with the introduction of Shari'ah in Nigeria are likely obstacles to his success.



strategies. At the forefront of the international campaign against poverty reduction, the United Nations and its agencies, such as the UNDP, including World Bank and International Bank for Development worth mentioning. Martinuessen (1999) argues that Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) represents an international model, which is directly introduced by the World Bank for fighting poverty. It comes as a sharp replacement of the orthodox macro-economic philosophy of trickle down, which characterized failed Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP). The strategies of poverty reduction in the PRSP are three-fold. First, it involves helping and empowering the poor through the provision of labour-intensive technologies and other employment opportunities, so that they will be more productive in using their asset, which is labour. Secondly, it emphasizes the facilitation of poor people's access to basic social services through the establishment and sponsorship of primary health care, family planning, nutritional assistance, primary education among others. The PRSPs also stresses the extension of direct assistance to the hard-core poor, who are relatively difficult to reach through the activities enshrined in the first and second focal points above.

Notwithstanding, the juicy, creamy, lofty and catchy ideas grafted in the 10 year-old PRSP, the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) argues in 2007 that the utilization of PRSP as a framework for dishing out grants and aids to various National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS) is weak. The infirmity resides with the denial of the recipient countries full access to gain ownership of the policies, which are incorporated in the NPRS. Alternatively the CDP (2007) fine tune the PRSP to look into 4 key points, reshaping of strategies for poverty reduction, especially their modalities and policies, creation and facilitation of new partnerships and sources of finance, establishment of fair trading environment and enhancement of the roles of Economic and Social Council, a UN agency in poverty reduction-related matters.

Nkom (2008) argues that this is not the first time global partnerships through the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) are exposing Nigeria and other developing countries to dangerous strategies of poverty reduction. Most of the 1980s and 1990s neo-liberal economic principles, especially liberal economic reform agenda (optimal allocation of productive factors and distribution of commodities as well as fast economic growth) are unfavourable to poverty reduction. As parts of the struggle to realize the goals above, the World Bank in conjunction with the IMF influenced the developing countries, including Nigeria to operate market-oriented agenda under SAP. The agenda focuses on downsizing (reduction of expenditure and social spending, withdrawal of subsidies and public workers' retrenchment) state government. It also stresses the enthronement of private sector as the dominant economic player against the state involvement through privatization of state enterprises, abolition of state-owned

price control board, promotion of private domestic and foreign investment and deregulation of economy. The liberalization of foreign trade through the removal of all forms of protectionism, devaluation of national currency, promotion of export-oriented economic activity and obeying of all protocols of World Trade Organisations (WTOs) is included in the agenda.

Nigerian government, like many governments in sub-Saharan Africa has had a long history of poverty reduction-related policies and programmes. The experimented poverty reduction strategies in Nigeria, include Udoji Welfare Package, Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS), Universal Primary Education Programme (UPE), Accelerated Development Area (ADA), River Basin Development Authorities (RBDA), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) Green Revolution, War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), People's Bank of Nigeria (PBN), Community Banks, Co-operatives Societies, Better Life Programme for Rural Women (BLP), Petroleum (Special) Trust Fund (PTF), Agricultural Development Programme (ADP), Family Support Programme (FSP), Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), National Agricultural and Cooperative (NACB) and FADAMA II Project (Obadan, 2003; Omorodion, 2007; Osinubi, 2003; Oyeranti & Olayiwola, 2005).

Obadan (2003) argues that these schemes hardly salvage many Nigerian due to wrong targeting of beneficiaries, political and policy instability, inadequate coordination, weak budgetary, management and governance, absence of accountability and transparency. Other factors are excessive coverage areas, absence of set target for government ministries, agencies and programmes, lack of involving beneficiaries in programme design and implementation, poor collaborative work among stakeholders, failure of focused and agreeable agenda by all stakeholders and lack of sustainability. Since, most schemes had shortcomings, poverty among indigenes remains inadequately addressed, let alone among internal and foreign migrants. The Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs), which has been in operation across some communities in Latin America, Asia and Africa, has been pilot-tested in Nigeria. The CCT revolves around giving monies to parents with prescribed condition that they, as beneficiaries of the social safety net programme should in turn utilize the monies to provide education and health services to their children. While, Fiszbein & Schady (2009) and Lomeli (2008) argued that CCTs have reduced poverty, gender disparity, social exclusion and increased investment in education and health in many countries, the programme impacted less in mitigating poverty in Nigeria. After all, only few have idea about the programme in Nigeria. Omorodion (2007) explains that most micro-credit schemes that are designed for improving Esan women's life in Ekpoma and

Ubiaja areas, Nigeria have failed for being located far away from the beneficiaries' residential areas. Further, spouses' controlled of women's incomes, governments and micro-credit institutions' threats of applying litigation and coercion for repayment of loans, cultural practices and expectations have weaken poor people's patronage of the institutions. These realities, contradict few of the conditions upon which political leaders in other parts of the world, like Malaysia and other advanced communities respond to poverty. Ismail (2001) argues that Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM) neither requests collateral and interest charges from beneficiaries of its loans nor takes legal action for unpaid debt of a living borrower and repayment of debt by a deceased borrower. It is right to infer from the above that the potencies of Nigerian Governments' projects in fumigating social pathologies in general and poverty in particular seriously human face, milk of kindness and sense of forgiveness for the benefits of insolvent borrowers.

As a rider to the failures of Nigerian political leaders in fighting poverty in the country, the minds of Nigerians are still fresh about the regime of the immediate past Nigerian President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, who initiated a number of programmes in the name of economic recovery and empowerment. Among these programmes are the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), which he initially tagged, 'National Poverty Alleviation', National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS), Local Council Economic and Development Strategy (LEEDS), (Abdulrahman, 2005; Alubo, 2007; Nkom, 2008). It is possible that the deficiencies in the Nigeria's previous poverty fighting schemes prompted the 2001 introduction of the National Poverty Eradication that was later acquired by the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS 1 and 2) in the immediate past political regime (Abdulrahman, 2005). Yet millions are living in poverty, especially internal and international migrants.

Successor to Obasanjo, Alhaji Umar Musa Yar'Adua also designed strategic action plan, the 7-points agenda for alleviating poverty and driving Nigeria to modern economy and industrialised nation by 2020. The agenda revolves around the development of power and energy, food security, wealth creation, transport sector, land reforms, security and education (Nigeria World Pages, 2007). Of these targets, it is only wealth creation that has direct bearing on poverty reduction, although others have indirect link with poverty reduction. These are catchy and lofty poverty reduction-driven programmes, but the criteria with which poor people access the poverty reduction packages have not receive serious appraisal. This strategic action plan; 7-points agenda is intended to drive Nigeria to modern economy and industrialised nation by 2020 (Yakubu, 2009). Nigeria is working on Vision 2020 Plan of being among the world

largest 20 economies. Truly, Nigeria's 7-points plan focuses on the development of power and energy, food security, wealth creation, transport sector, land reforms, security and education (Yakubu, 2009), but the degree to which it responds to poverty is dismal. Yet the socio-economic levels of Nigerians continue to shrink amidst global financial and economic slumps - 64.4% of Nigeria's population live on less than US\$1.25 per day (UNDP, 2009). It is doubtful, if this figure includes poor immigrants.

It is disturbing that various brands of poverty reduction schemes came on board in the macro-economic landscape of Nigeria for years, still the gap between the rich and the poor, especially the slums dwellers and government reservation areas' occupants (Sampson, 2009) continues to deepening. Although, studies have been conducted and documented on the fruition and friction between poverty reduction packages and marginalised groups, most of the studies have had rather limited impact in the design, planning and implementation of institutional policy. The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED, 2004) points that some governments' poverty reduction failed because of income-based poverty' definition, less estimation of its scale and depth; non-involvement of local resources in fighting non-income poverty and lack of direct support to community-based action in urban areas. Thus, policy design for poverty alleviation in any society ought to take into account the trend of occurrence, its definition based on the societal values and culture (Nugroho, 2006). In sum, objective interrogation and negotiation deserve to be embarked upon in the studies of poverty reduction, as every new government always introduce one strategy for poverty reduction or the other and the miserable conditions of most people remained unaddressed.

## PROGRESS AND PROSPECTS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST INCOME AND HUMAN POVERTY IN NIGERIA

Beyond doubt, Nigerian Governments have responded to poverty issues through skills enhancement, career development training, Federal Mortgage Bank's housing loan, National Emergency Management Agency's (NEMA) charity for victims of floods, fire disasters and violent crises etcetera. The transformation of Community Banks to Micro-Finance Banks for the purpose of providing soft loan facility to people. The ideology and practice of giving microcredit financial support to the poor have boosted entrepreneurship and living conditions of a quite number people. The Federal and State Governments' initiation and maintenance of public transport services, as well as repackaging of security services attest to the progress recorded over the last 50 years of independence achieved in Nigeria. In addition, establishments, equipping and monitoring of primary health care centres, General Hospital, Specialist Hospitals,

Federal Medical Centre, Teaching Hospitals, including mobile clinics and environmental sanitation facilities by Governments have impacted positively many lives. However, more need to be done considering the increasing number of people in Nigeria.

Nigeria has recorded small amount of progress in combating poverty within her domain, although this success story does not correspond with substantial revenues being generated in the country over 50 years. Even the little achievement put in place rarely matches majority of Nigerians' high expectations. Nevertheless, out of all the prospects that lie ahead of 50 year-old postcolonial Nigeria in the fight against poverty, the introduction of modern scientific research, while she was partnering with Europe is observable, acknowledgeable and remarkable. It is through these relations that diverse scientific subjects are taught in and objects bought from and sold to Nigeria and Europe, which invariably benefitted Nigerian populace. The postcolonial expatriates, skills, scholarship, fellowship, funding among other supports given to Nigerians from Europe did not only justified the postcolonial links between the regions, but also attest to the prospect in poverty alleviation in the country. The European administrative and lifestyles, which shaped the socio-cultural structure of postcolonial Nigeria, though these witnessed few alterations, add hope to Nigerians.

Further, the ongoing projects of neutralizing ethnic, tribal, religious and regional political campaigns in preparation for 2011 General Elections, which are related to Nigeria's low progress revitalizes people's confidence in the country. What is more, the misguided information given to the non-elites the adverse effects of colonialism on Nigeria's development are gradually being corrected through academic lectures, public speeches, discussions and writings of liberal elites. The availability of petroleum products - diesel, fuel, lubricant oil, kerosene, including gas in most filling stations in the country invigorates Nigerians' hope for better tomorrow. The strategy of retrieving arms and ammunitions from militants groups, retired service men and women, while compensating them constitute a great initiative of the current political administration. Owing to this exercise, relative peace and security have been maintained in Nigeria, especially in the Niger-Delta region. The creation of Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs has tremendously promoted peace education, self-employment and positive thinking among the warring communities and militant youths in Niger Delta. Even, the maintenance of roads through Federal Roads Maintenance Agency (FERMA) and increased provision of transport and communication services, especially the introduction of mobile phone made communication easier within and outside the country. The increment of workers' salary all are hoping rising to the dying souls of Nigerians. By and large, the relative respects for rule of law, which replaces the use of

naked force and brutalities that permeate military regimes in the country strengthen Nigeria's human rights' records at global sphere, while attracting more tourists and investors to the country.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The country's growing unemployment, underemployment, low remuneration, weak savings and investments, corruption, short access to basic services coupled with the 64.4% people, who survive on less than US\$1.25 in 2000-2007 attest to her poverty in the midst of plenty. These pathologies accrued from the political leaders' motivated bad governance, weak economic policies, plans, implementation and non-commitment of private organizations in Nigeria's developmental projects. The ongoing Nigeria's democratic institutionalization sends hope to people. Nigeria needs collective participation of all development's stakeholders to drag in good political leadership, as a developmental tool. This requires promotion of Euro-Nigerian partnership, which is likely to serve as parts of the ingredients for sustainable development in the country. This largely depend on down-to-earth reconstruction of the misrepresented realities and failed social policies in Nigeria, while creating, adopting, implementing and monitoring hybrid models for the nation's development. Exploration of new, indeed alternative perspectives of understanding the obstacles facing contemporary Africa, as she relate with Europe stand to add flavour to income and human poverty eradication policies, plans, and programmes in Nigeria. Shared actions are also required to provide reliable and adequate power supply, as well as potable water across the country. The deplorable conditions of roads that are the main source by which masses can effectively network with their families and friends for better and prospective economic opportunities need to be fixed. Pro-poor security, safety, health, social and educational schemes need not only to be launched by federal, state and local governments, but also should be supported by all development partners and made readily accessible to poor people without any kind of discrimination. Further, concerted efforts need to be harnessed to arrest, prosecute, if found guilty punish public and private officials, who have contributed in impoverishing Nigerians through corrupt practices.

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