

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MASS POVERTY IN AFRICA: ASSESSMENT OF THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

The forces surrounding the emerging economies of underdeveloped world, especially Africa has practically stifled its economic progress, growth, development and sustainability. This economic condition brings to the fore the massive onslaught of rural/urban poverty which the African continent grapples with since the post-world war II era to date. The economic misfortunes and incidence of mass poverty in Africa, vis-à-vis Nigeria is used as a point of departure in this study. The paper underscores the ideological and philosophical undertone of international capital manifesting in form of colonialism and imperialism as a major character in the historical process of underdevelopment and mass poverty in peripheral states of Africa, Asia and Latin America, respectively. Of particular interest in this study is the activities of domestic bourgeoisie elite class who have vigorously displayed some degree of lack of much needed vision and abject lack of desires to draw up workable plans to redeem the battered image of African/ Nigerian economic misfortunes. This state of affairs has practically engendered economic underdevelopment, misery and disturbing levels of poverty in the nation-state system. The paper concludes with the forward towards realizing the vision 20-20-20 objectives in the 21st century and beyond.

Keywords: Poverty, Economic Development, Leadership Idiosyncrasies, Personal Interests

INTRODUCTION

The rising tides of post-world war II experiences and the shocks arising from poor socio-economic fortunes of African states remains a major impediments to growth, socio-economic and political development in the region. Africa suffers an ugly trend of colonial domination, exploitation and manipulation to the extent of which the capitalist traits have literally been transferred to the comprador African domestic elite who in turn are constrained by the very nature of their imperial grand masters to do little or nothing to stimulate economic growth as well as alleviate mass poverty. The foregoing is a demonstration of the ideological and philosophical questions of the spirit of primitive accumulation (Luxemburg, 1913; Onimode, 1995; Goulbourne, 1979), the attitude which, of course was handed down to African leadership from their superior masters. The inability to allow for social change as well as adopt home-grown economic designs that could ultimately transform the economies of backward nation-states constitutes a fundamental setback on the road to progress of less developed countries, especially in the African continent. Situations such as this propels underdevelopment, backwardness, lack of focus and vision for strategic development plans; deterioration in living conditions of the African people, unemployment, famine, disease pandemics, illiteracy, terrorism, malnutrition, violence and war and, ultimately entrenchment of poverty in the socio-economic landscape.

Inspite of the structures and institutions put in place in recent decades by the leadership to fast track the development pace of Africa and move the continent to the next level, it appears that such efforts have largely yielded no results thereby further plunging the fragile economies to monumental disaster. For example, African leadership has consummated the much talked New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as a critical structure for Africa socio-economic development and sustainability (Agbokharm, 2005; ADB, 2006; Iradian, 2005). Similarly, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) consummated by African leadership, which basically serves as an avenue for checks and balances remains a lofty policy plan on paper with little or no impact on the

dwindling fortunes of the African economies and its people. The multiplier effect of this state of affairs is the deterioration of the social, political and economic prospects of the continent with its corresponding bastardization of infrastructural development including among other hospitals, schools, good road network, electricity, etc. These basic existential of human needs are simply elusive and, hence, characterizes the life style of the African race. Also worthy of mention is the spate of political unrest, high level of corruption, war, terrorism, environmental degradation, droughts, rebellion, poor political culture and the dearth of good governance; refugee crisis, disease pandemic (including HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, etc); unemployment, human trafficking, to mention but a few. To be sure, the catastrophes as captured in the aforementioned have become part and parcel of African states. Thus from Nigeria to Sudan, Ivory Coast, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Somalia, Kenya, Zimbabwe and of course, the recent calamities and political upheavals in North Africa (Egypt, Tunisia, Libya etc). All of these, including the already helpless internal political contradictions of African states are quintessential in the description of the suffocating posture of the kind of underdevelopment Africa has faced and is still facing to date. This paper therefore sets to interrogate the missing link in Africa's efforts at forestalling the bad socio-economic trend. The paper draws from the development strategies of Nigeria aimed at moving away from the murky waters of underdevelopment and excruciating poverty. The paper will also proffer solutions to the sorry state of mass poverty, lack of economic progress and overall national rebirth in all its ramifications.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

A closer look at economic development concepts will show a massive revelation of contradictions. Most of its problems therefore arise as a result of the myth surrounding the design and approaches of development paradigm in relation to the actual impacts they have on the social milieu. Todaro (2003) argued that the experiences of the 1950s and 1960s when many developing countries did realize their economic growth – targets but the living conditions of the masses of people remained for the main part unchanged, signaled that something was very wrong with this narrow definition of development. The

problematic of development concepts is considered against the backdrop of narrow imaginations and economic assumptions that once there is increase in output, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and overall net macro-economic index, then, of course, there is development. Smith (1996), Ake (1981) Padayachee (2010) and Rodney (1972) buttress the argument above when they posit that economic development as alluded by managers of states in Africa without a corresponding impact on the level of poverty, unemployment, hunger, etc, is a farce and falls short of globally accepted standard of measurement.

The argument above therefore explains the increasing level of clamour by economists and critics for the “dethronement of GNP” and the prioritization of direct attacks on widespread poverty, increasingly inequitable income distribution, rising unemployment and environmental disasters (Erunke and Usman, 2009; Onimode, 1993; Oduola, 2001). This sentiment is very common amongst rightist scholars of the post-development administration era who holds the view that economic development can be redefined in terms of reduction or elimination of poverty, inequality and unemployment within the context of a growing economy. This is quite antithetical to the growth theory model which may not necessary translate into pro-poor developmental agenda. The undesirability of this kind of development thinking has been criticized by Dudley Seers who poses the basic questions about the meaning of development viz:

The questions to ask about a country’s development are therefore: what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result “development” even if per capita income is doubled (Seers as cited in Smith et al, 2003).

It goes without saying that Seers analysis as above reinforces the initial position held by Erunke and Usman (2009) and those of Onimode (1993), and Oduola (2001), on the need to re-think developmental practices that are capable of empowering and

transforming the living standard of less developed economies in all ramifications. To be sure, a number of developing countries experienced relatively high rates of per capita income during the 1960s and 1970s but showed an asymmetrically declining unemployment rates, poverty and low standard of living. By the earlier development concepts therefore, these countries were developing; but there was no corresponding improvement in the people's living conditions. The aftermath of the state of helplessness of Third world conditions such as the one portrayed above is the direct consequences of the fall-outs of the manipulation orchestrated by the developed worlds including North America and Europe (Aigbokhan, 2008; Hume, 2008; Ayres, 1995).

These political entities constitute a moving global force represented by capitalism whose ideologies have become dominant epistles in the affairs of governance in the less developed countries (LDCs). Thus, there has been a growing and increasing tendency of African leadership to cave in as a result of external pressures to either deregulate their economies or borrow superficial economic development paradigms and impose the same on its people thereby further exposing the entire continent to the volatility of socioeconomic and political malaise. In Nigeria, for example, the Babangida military autocracy condescended into the idea of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1986 as a way of salvaging the comatose Nigerian economy (Islam, 2006; Kim, 2007; Khan, 2006; Erunke, 2009). The effect of the SAP agenda has brought in its wake diverse austerity measures put in place by government, be they military or civilian alike. The aftermath of this is the untold hardship, unemployment, violence, military, illiteracy, inequality and ultimately poverty, it has unleashed on the Dark Continent to date.

Conversely, the lack of development and the loss of vision, expertise and focus of agents of state in the proper identification and management of developmental practices brings with it massive underdevelopment as well as entrench massive poverty. Government at all levels in Africa appears to have lost every sense of direction, corporate group interest, responsibility and responsiveness (Akpa, 2001; Akinsanya and Erunke, 2010). Therefore, the affairs of governance in Africa, merely provides a platform for private self

accumulation and enrichment (Ake, 1981; Ihonvbere, 1995). Heads of government in Africa prides in the worsening socio-economic conditions of the people as exemplified in the excessive clinch to power and the inordinate desires to stay on even when there seem to be no popular support. That aside, the various economic designs and prognosis in these states in Africa are structurally banal, blank and proffers little or no solution to actual social problems of poverty reduction, disease control, war, crime and other vises. Neither, does the available institutions and structures of government able to deliver on its declining infrastructural needs to satisfy the teeming population (George-Genyi, 2011).

By extension therefore, economic development is more or less holistic in approach and concept. It is a planned alteration of the structures of production which results to massive industrialization and socio-economic re-engineering. It transcends beyond mere hypothesizing and theorizing to the transformation of the human person, dignity and self-esteem. When this is achieved, it then follows logically that poverty would have been drastically reduced in the lives of the African people as a whole.

THEORETICAL ISSUES

Questions about economic development practices in Africa are attributed to external paradigms borrowed usually from the western world, and precisely those of North America and Europe. For this reason, the study adopts a neo-Marxist approach as a point of departure. This theoretical underpinning is relevant in the sense of which the various elements of international capitalism and imperialism is understood. Thus the neo-Marxist dependency model as an off-shoot of the Marxian philosophy is a school of thought which explains the predicaments of Third world nations as a consequence of measures of underdevelopment foisted on such entities by the west (Ake, 1981; Onimode, 1995; Rodney, 1972). Underdevelopment in Third world nations of Africa, Asia and Latin American states therefore follows a historical process of colonization, subjugation, domination, expropriation and, ultimately exploitation. This scenario of exploitation spirals into the trajectory of economic misfortunes of less developed entities and hence,

entrenches the possibilities of backwardness, poverty and misery. To further buttress the foregoing, Baran (1962) posits that:

Whether intentionally exploitative or unintentionally neglected, the co-existence of rich and poor nations in an international system dominated by such unequal power relations between the “Centre” and the “periphery” renders attempts by poor societies development efforts difficult and sometimes even impossible (1962:69).

The point of emphasis on the activities of dominant foreign capital as exemplified above is further worsened by the comprador domestic elite class in Third world states. These petit – bourgeoisie elements who are managers of state structures, which of course is tenuous, do not necessarily allow development to happen. The reason being the said elite class possibly benefit from a weak system which they themselves have helped to consolidate much to the detriment of the already impoverished masses (Oyeranti and Olayiwola, 2005). Mass poverty therefore is an extension of the unholy alliances between the forces of capital and those of the commissioned agents. The duo constitutes a veritable social force capable of stifling an economic system and making it sterile. The inability of the system to cater for the teeming population, create a viable institutions and structures to accommodate pressures, etc, is a direct consequence of endemic poverty, either in terms of standard of living, poverty of ideas or the lack of direction to generate comprehensive action plan for overall socio-economic growth, development and sustainability in the African continent as a whole.

THE STATE, MASS POVERTY AND THE PROBLEMS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

There is a dialectical relationship between poverty and the role of the state. The latter in this sense is used to mean the various structures, personnel and institutions available for the administration of a given political entity. The point of emphasis here is that the viability, commitment and decisiveness of the state and its structures impact passively on the mass of the people. On the other hand, the state in turn requires input and support from the masses to produce results that will enhance the attainment of societal goals.

When the two concentric circles meet at a point, a common ground is achieved, thereby enhancing greater opportunities for growth, development and sustainability (Ngu, 1999; Todaro, 2003).

Drawing from above, emphasis on development, poverty therefore could be reduced drastically. To be sure, poverty in Africa takes the form of chronic/ structural or conjunctural/transient (Adadu, 2012; Abdullahi, 1993; NPC, 1995). By extension, structural/chronic poverty is long term or persistent. Its causes are more permanent and depend on a host of factors such as limited productive resources, lack of skills for gainful employment, locational disadvantage, or endemic socio-cultural factors. On the other hand, conjunctural/transitory poverty is temporary/ transient or short-term. It is mainly due to natural disasters (e.g. droughts, typhoon, excessive flooding etc); man-made disasters like wars and environmental degradation and structural adjustment reforms and changes in domestic economic policies to mention but a few. In any case, poverty in Africa like in all developing economies are not without causes. Obadan (1977) enumerated the causes of poverty in sub-Saharan Africa to include inadequate access to employment opportunities, inadequate physical needs, such as land and capital, and minimal access by the poor to credit even on a small scale; inadequate access to means of supporting rural development in poor regions; inadequate access to market when 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 and lack of participation, that is, the failure to draw the poor into the design of development programme (Adadu as cited in Obadan, 1997).

The problem of lack of inclusion in vital policy planks in Africa brings to the fore the role of the state vis-à-vis socio-economic development and poverty reduction. This shortfall on the part of the state structure and its institution has been criticized by Onimode and Synge (1995) who argued that:

In many African countries, the state is the main organ of development. It is nonetheless, unable to fulfill many development objectives and needs because of what has been referred to as the paradox of development in Africa, which makes the state both the promoter and inhibitor of development (1995:92).

The foregoing depicts a political entity such as those of Africa which evolves through a historical process of colonialism and capitalist orientation. It is therefore not out of place to say that the survival of the state rather than socio-economic development has been a major pre-occupation of many African governments. To substantiate this argument, Onimode and Synge (1995) further noted that:

African states came into being as a result of colonial intervention, and have been plagued with economic problems... as a result, most African states have become over-politicized, over-centralized and increasingly alienated from the masses. Resources are mismanaged and diverted to the non-productive and non-social development oriented areas such that mass interest is summarily ignored (1995:92).

It is clear from the above that African states and government dwell so much on the control of public institutions and structures. Thus, excessive bureaucratization and control over most political and economic institutions and activities have become characteristics of most African states. Failure to produce enough surpluses for popular needs has resulted in large-scale mass poverty. The deterioration of most rural economics has seriously eroded subsistence economies, and threatens the survival of several artisanal and rural communities, which harbour majority of the African population. Even in the relatively industrialized country like Cote di'Ivoire, two-thirds of the population is employed in agriculture (ADB, 2006).

MASS POVERTY AND THE CONTRADICTION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN NIGERIA

In the preceding analysis, it is evident that the scourge of poverty in less developed countries especially Africa, is problematic and impedes every sense of human pride, self-esteem and progress. The context of poverty as a scholarly discourse has largely

estranged an average African, namely, Nigerian to his physical environment, limits his scope of existence and broader interaction with his fellow men and women, engenders high level of inequality between and amongst persons in the society, etc. According to the United Nations Human Development Report (2008-2009) an average Nigerian lives below US\$1 dollars a day (2008:91). Excruciating poverty in Nigeria has practically pitched an average Nigerian pole apart with his counterparts in most urban centres, especially politicians and those at the corridors of power. Olabode and Elegbede have both criticized this scenario when they argued that the creation of poverty is an artificial handiwork of the rich who control the affairs of state, its resources and the entire paraphernalia of government. They further noted that excessive craze for primitive accumulation by the political class at the detriment of the rural masses results to mass poverty. It is noteworthy that Nigeria's oil wealth has so much put the country in a vantage economic fortune so much so that Nigeria is ranked by UNDP as the 6th largest exporter of crude to the international market. Yet, it is also apparent that there is massive dearth of leadership will to meticulously harness the rich natural endowment and resources in the overall interest of the masses. This is aggravated further by the incidence of political corruption that has characterized the post-colonial Nigerian state to date. Side by side this argument is that the rural populace is worse hit in terms of poverty ratio. This is inspite of very many bogus policy plans of government to alleviate the chequered conditions of the people shortly after political independence in 1960. Some of these policies includes, but not limited to operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution, Better Life for Rural Women, Directorate for Food Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Poverty Alleviation Programme, National Poverty Eradication Programme, etc (CNB, 1999). All of these laudable policies have largely remained on paper and, hence, suffered dangerous setback in the implementation process. It is also worth noting that both military autocracy and civilian bigots have fared in the same direction in terms of policy failures in Nigeria. Thus, the multiplier effect of this policy summersault is the untold hardship and pauperization of the Nigerian people, especially those within the rural setting.

CAUSES OF MASS POVERTY AND ECONOMIC BACKWARDNESS IN NIGERIA

From the on-going investigations in this paper, it has been observed that extreme cases of poverty in Nigeria are better explained within the context of the rural dwellers across states and geographical zones. Nonetheless, the root causes of mass poverty stems from very many factors including the contradictions and inconsistency of government policies and programmes, political instability, lack of direction and sincerity of purpose of the managers of state and ultimately, misapplication of public funds meant for the execution of critical projects for poverty alleviation. Experiences in the last ten years has shown that public funds meant for the revitalization of ailing sectors including the power, telecommunication, aviation, roads construction, pension fund administration and, most recently, the on-going petroleum down-stream sector probe. All these sectors contributes in one way or the other in job creation, poverty reduction, economic development and sustainability if they are genuinely harnessed in the best interest of the nation and the teeming public. However, the sad news is that meaningful economic development and poverty reduction through these mediums have been stalled and halted. It goes without saying that all other efforts aimed at improving the Nigerian state are literally been hijacked by the so-called ‘cabal’ who are too big for any security apparatus to convict and prosecute at least to serve as deterrent to potential cabals.

From the point of view of poverty index in Nigeria, it has also been discovered that poverty incidences are not limited to rural dwellers alone. It also affects those in the urban and semi-urban centres. However, the rural settlers are worse for it mainly due to their inability to access most opportunities in the urban centres. The reason for this is, of course, due to ignorance, lack of information, lack of exposure and lack of financial wherewithal to explore such opportunities. Basically, however, the recent poverty index by states published by the UNDP Report shows that states such as Yobe, Borno, Kebbi, Katsina and Bauchi are worse off in terms of poverty profile. The next set of states with

high poverty incidence includes Jigawa, Gombe, Taraba, Kano and Niger. This is further depicted in table 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 respectively.

Table 1.1: Human Development Statistics by States in Nigeria

S/N	States	Human Development Index (HDI) Value	Human Poverty Index	Gender Development Measure	Gender Empowerment Measure	Inequality Measure
	Abia	0.516	21.9	0.527	0.383	0.30
	Adamawa	0.372	42.4	0.287	0.285	0.33
	Akwa Ibom	0.616	27.1	0.622	0.310	0.34
	Anambra	0.427	22.8	0.437	0.414	0.40
	Bauchi	0.291	48.8	0.070	0.129	0.40
	Bayelsa	0.593	32.5	0.600	0.219	0.40
	Benue	0.532	36.0	0.508	0.204	0.40
	Borno	0.345	55.9	0.250	0.033	0.40
	Cross River	0.539	31.9	0.544	0.148	0.40
	Delta	0.592	23.6	0.591	0.316	0.40
	Ebonyi	0.401	34.3	0.398	0.284	0.40
	Edo	0.465	21.7	0.475	0.148	0.40
	Ekiti	0.523	22.1	0.519	0.380	0.40
	Enugu	0.502	28.6	0.494	0.192	0.40
	Gombe	0.353	45.0	0.076	0.057	0.40
	Imo	0.510	22.7	0.418	0.303	0.40
	Jigawa	0.362	48.4	0.303	0.055	0.40
	Kaduna	0.448	34.3	0.422	0.213	0.40
	Kano	0.436	43.0	0.333	0.092	0.40
	Katsina	0.410	49.9	0.383	0.129	0.44
	Kebbi	0.377	50.2	0.383	0.175	0.46
	Kogi	0.411	34.4	0.359	0.069	0.46
	Kwara	0.429	33.3	0.470	0.482	0.47
	Lagos	0.607	14.5	0.548	0.357	0.48
	Nasarawa	0.488	38.5	0.465	0.236	0.48
	Niger	0.463	42.8	0.474	0.244	0.48
	Ogun	0.465	24.5	0.466	0.247	0.50
	Ondo	0.592	23.9	0.586	0.181	0.50
	Osun	0.475	22.1	0.475	0.234	0.50
	Oyo	0.478	21.9	0.447	0.311	0.50
	Plateau	0.392	36.5	0.393	0.415	0.50
	Rivers	0.633	22.8	0.616	0.367	0.50
	Sokoto	0.475	40.5	0.385	0.099	0.50
	Taraba	0.351	43.4	0.651	0.032	0.50
	Yobe	0.278	58.0	0.166	0.172	0.50
	Zamfara	0.434	42.6	0.422	0.056	0.51
	FCT Abuja	0.717	21.0	0.680	0.062	0.64

Source: NBS, Human Development Indicators, 2008.

Table 1.2: Human Development Summary Statistics, by Zones

Zones	Human Development Index (HDI) Value	Human Poverty Index (HPI)	Gender Development Measure (GDM)	Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)	Inequality Measure (INQ)
North Central	0.490	34.65	0.478	0.244	0.49
NorthWest	0.420	44.15	0.376	0.117	0.44
North East	0.332	48.90	0.250	0.118	0.42
SouthWest	0.523	21.50	0.507	0.285	0.48
South East	0.471	26.07	0.455	0.315	0.38
South South	0.573	26.61	0.575	0.251	0.41

Source: NHDR Team 2008-2009

Table 1.3: Population, GDP & Per Capita by Zones in Nigeria

States	Population	GDP in Million Naira	GDP per capita in Naira	GDP per capita in US \$
South East				
Abia	3,051,841	156,581.86	51,307.34	407.75
Anambra	4,459,236	91,536.69	20,527.44	163.14
Ebonyi	2,317,922	57,656.38	24,874.17	197.68
Enugu	3,388,168	131,168.00	38,713.55	307.67
Imo	3,963,039	205,609.17	51,881.69	412.32
Total	17,180,206.00	642,552.10	37,400.72	297.20
South West				
Ekiti	2,449,007	97,551.83	39,833.22	316.56
Lagos	9,131,112	2,935,593.30	321,493.52	2,544.98
Ogun	3,721,345	115,791.01	31,115.37	247.28
Ondo	3,587,265	762,093.19	212,444.07	1,688.34
Osun	3,441,186	79,271.30	23,036.04	183.07
Oyo	5,505,815	194,182.18	35,268.56	280.29
Total	25,386,723.00	4,184,482.81	164,829.58	1,309.94
South South				
Akwa Ibom	3,841,712	1,843,218.56	479,790.93	3,813.01

Bayelsa	1,788,957	1,212,867.01	677,974.38	5,388.02
Cross River	3,048,375	321,901.19	76,073.71	604.58
Delta	4,130,761	1,208,594.31	292,583.94	2,235.23
Edo	3,463,629	142,784.30	41,223.90	327.62
Rivers	5,084,192	3,333,507.68	655,661.25	5,210.69
Total	17,515,914.00	7,972,873.05	455,178.82	3,617.41
North Central				
Benue	4,390,184	792,405.51	180,494.83	1,434.43
Kogi	3,424,637	63,348.75	18,497.95	147.01
Kwara	2,469,200	99,490.24	40,292.50	320.21
Nasarawa	1,926,153	297,301.17	154,349.72	1,226.65
Niger	3,862,030	820,194.99	212,374.06	1,687.57
Plateau	3,356,070	82,165.65	24,482.70	194.57
FCT Abuja	592,886	761,583.40	1,284,535.97	10,208.50
Total	12,206,399.00	2,916,489.71	238,932.39	1,898.85
North East				
Adamawa	3,352,085	88,296.94	26,340.90	209.34
Bauchi	4,563,897	95,798.53	20,990.51	166.82
Borno	4,044,366	269,473.62	66,629.39	529.52
Gombe	2,374,698	105,286.06	44,336.61	352.35
Taraba	2,411,441	43,020.00	17,839.95	141.78
Yobe	2,232,186	73,308.50	32,841.58	261.00
Total	15,626,588.00	675,183.65	43,207.36	343.38
North West				
Jigawa	4,585,695	574,713.28	125,327.41	996.01
Kaduna	6,276,729	558,386.58	88,961.40	707.00
Kano	9,266,314	797,251.26	86,037.58	683.76
Katsina	5,984,866	748,767.07	125,110.08	994.28
Kebbi	3,298,579	211,057.04	63,984.23	508.50
Sokoto	3,822,365	716,514.16	187,358.92	1,488.98

Source: NBS, Human Development Indicators, 2008

CONCLUSION

The paper examined the correlates between economic development and mass poverty in Africa particularly reference to Nigeria's rural poor. The study x-rays the increasing role of international capital manifested through the instrumentalities of colonialism and

colonialism. Of particular interest in this research is the link between external forces of capital and Africa's domestic bourgeoisie class. The latter appears to play a complementary role in the stifling or otherwise of less developed economies. This they do through the wild acceptance of foreign conceptions, ideologies and philosophies which may not necessarily align with domestic peculiarities. The backlash effect of this obnoxious policy finds expression in the down-ward spiral and movement of the already chequered economies of less developed countries and this ultimately enhance mass poverty. In spite of lofty socio-economic transformation agenda designed by African/Nigerian leadership, the state of poverty appears to be on the increase. Less developed countries therefore owe it a duty to design policies and programmes that are pro-poor, the essence of which is to build confidence on the poor masses as well as make life meaningful for the people. This, no doubt, will adequately boost the economies and fortunes of the underdeveloped world and its swarming populace in the 21st century and beyond.

THE WAY FORWARD

The socio-economic backwardness of underdeveloped economies is a matter of concern to researchers and scholars alike. It is in the best interest of all and sundry that better and meaningful lives are enhanced, development engendered and poverty eradicated or reduced to the barest minimum. What is to be done therefore must start with the leadership. This is because those at that level possess the arsenal necessary for the control of affairs of state. It is the onus of the leadership, to position itself in truth as well to cultivate a decisive spirit of patriotism and nationalism to sincerely move the continent forward. The determination of the leadership to be purposeful and resilient in the quest for all-inclusive policies for poverty reduction has the capability to trickle down to those at the grassroot. This development reinforces itself in high level trust, mutual co-existence, stability and development. The after effect is therefore a result a strong, viable and reliable economy where there will be massive group participation, collective interest and higher national aspirations aimed at realizing the vision 20–20–20 in the next few years from here.

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