

# Understanding Poverty from Within: Approaching Complications through Implicating Policies in Nigeria

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*Received: 12 December 2013 Accepted: 2 January 2014 Published: 15 January 2014*

## Abstract

Nigeria is the largest black nation in the world. She is also the 6th oil producing country across the globe. However, Nigeria has one of the largest people living in poverty. Reports have indicated that more than 60

**Index terms**— poverty, alleviation, pathways, imperfection and policy.

I. Background to the Study igeria as giant of Africa is not novel, being a diverse country with pluralist endowment is not even debatable, what strikes intellectual and philosophical perceptions is Nigeria's exclusive uniqueness in inequality, injustice and "pervasive voicelessness". Similarly, one of the profound indicators to inhumanity and complementing scourge that indirectly impede efficient and effective functioning of other basic state machineries is poverty. expectancy, 3.2 % average growth rate, 69.1% adult literacy and 11.9% unemployment rate(excluding structural unemployment), are insignificant, poverty incidence of 54.4% should certainly strike imaginative intellectualism ??Country Review 2008).

According to UNDP report ??2001), poverty could be clustered on a five range level of analysis; first is "Income-Poverty" which connote measurement of income, the second is "Material-Lack" which is expressed in terms of complete unavailability or low quality of shelter, clothing and other personal needs, personal means, the third signifies "Capability Derivation" which could be understood when lack of skills and physical abilities and self-respect are considered, the fourth is couched as a "Multi-Dimensional Deprivation" from ill-being to well-being, while the fifth analogy is the "Multiplicity of Poverty".

In a report of Poverty and Social Analysis, (1999), poverty was considered as a major challenge to human survival, more deadlier and devastating than HIV and AIDS and whose consequences determines global development. The incidence, prevalence and distribution of poverty no doubt, invariably affect the development policy of most third world nations including Nigeria. It is fundamentally assertive that if poverty is not a substructure which determines other super structures, policy, reforms and measures would not have been potentially prioritized; and poverty considered as unacceptable human condition that can be eliminated through collective action (African Development Bank, 1999). In the opinion of Ijaya and Mobolaji, (2004), poverty portrays "moneylessness" and powerlessness, where moneylessness means insufficiency of cash and chronic inadequacy of resources to satisfy basic human needs, powerlessness on the other hand denotes lack of opportunities and choices which make life seemed governed from external forces.

Over the years, the federal government of Nigeria had initiated different intervention programmes (Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution, Structural Adjustment Programme, National Poverty Alleviation Programme, Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Better Life Programme (BLP), People's Bank of Nigeria (PBN), Community Banks Program, Family Support Programmes (FSP), the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) and the -Nigeria is the largest black nation in the world. She is also the 6 th oil producing country across the globe. However, Nigeria has one of the largest people living in poverty. Reports have indicated that more than 60% of the Nigerian population could be characterized with poverty. In spite of differing poverty intervention program(both the government and private agencies),poverty and inequality in Nigeria still wax in a sporadic trend. From Operation Feed the Nation to the recent You WIN program, Nigeria's development program seems conflictualwith the dreams of "collective poor". Similarly, the presence of unresolved contradictions, between subjective and relative poverty

perceptions among the Nigerian people, relatively contributes immensely, as well as contradicts the path-ways towards poverty reduction. Hence, despite government measures at reducing poverty, lackluster strategic intents ultimately inhibits among others, health care delivery and security of lives in Nigeria. Could poverty persistence have been attributed to policy imperfections? Weak political will? Or individual perceptions of inequality?. The contribution of this paper therefore, is entrenched in systemic analysis of rationale behind policy imperfections in the quest for poverty reductions in Nigeria using (NEEDS) as a point of reference. However, the paper argues that, for Nigeria to adequately address poverty agenda as one of the pointers of millennium development goals by 2015, pro-poor strategic policy reformation remains imperative. Abstract recent U WIN etc.) (Garba, 2006). at alleviating the ugly trend of poverty.

Instead of recording arithmetic progression in empowerment, the country increases in geometric social exclusion and lackluster strategic intents which were occasioned by poverty and poor policy implementation with attending consequences of political democracy, economic justice, religious tolerance, health care delivery, security of lives among others. It is amazing to note that various poverty alleviation strategies adopted by successive governments in Nigeria leaves much to be desired socially. Observers have unanimously agreed that these programs have failed to achieve the objectives for which they were established (Ovwaso, 2000; Desopo, 2008; Omotola, 2008). Against this backdrop, could poverty persistence have been attributed to policy imperfections? weak political will? or individual peculiar perceptions of inequality?. This paper crystallizes the intricacies of poverty alleviation and policies implications in Nigeria under the following synchronisms.

## 1 II. Theoretical Reflections on Poverty

It is significant to observe and maintain the fact that all definitions of poverty and the policies addressing them are all shaped by political biases and values: however, the idea of theoretical framework in social sciences is characterized by the requisition for analogous repositioning of concepts and variables, so that a direction and philosophical emphasis could be maintained on the past, present and future connections of the subject matter under focus.

Recent literature on poverty generally address different theories of poverty, however, these literature have classified these theories in multiple ways (for example, compare Blank, 2003; Goldsmith and Blakely, 1992; Jennings and Kushnick, 1999; Rodgers, 2000; Chiller, 1989; Haw, 1996). Practically, most authors distinguish between theories that root the cause of poverty in individual deficiencies (conservative) and theories that emphasize the cause on broader social phenomena (liberal or progressive). Goldsmith and Blakely, for example distinguish "Poverty as pathology" from "poverty as incident or accident" and "poverty as structure." Schiller, Big Brother." Jennings (1999) exemplifies a number of dichotomies on individual vs. society conceptions, attributing emphasis to racial and political dynamics, while Rank analyzed "the focus on individual attributes as the cause of poverty being misplaced and misdirected." Structural failings of the economic, political, and social system are regarded as the pointers here. (Rank 2004:50) The various theories are divergent, and each results in a different type of intervention strategy. Against this background, this paper shall explore only subculture theory that bears direct relevance to the problems established.

## 2 III. Sub-culture of Poverty Dimensions

Subculture theory of poverty is rooted from the sub-consciousness of ideology shared by a significant number of people in a community. Oscar Lewis (1961) considers sub-culture of poverty as "an adaptation to a set of objective conditions of the larger society, [but] once it comes into existence, it tends to perpetuate itself from generation to generation because of its effect on children". Similarly, poverty was considered as culturally self-reinforcing, its incidence was directly connected to "structural conditions in society" Massey and Denton, 1993, p.5).

The theory suggests that poverty is created by the transmission over generations of a set of beliefs, values, and skills that are socially generated, but individually held. Individuals are not necessarily to blame because they are victims of their dysfunctional subculture or culture. Therefore, the culture of poverty could be presumed as subculture of poor people in ghettos, poor regions, or social contexts where they develop a shared set of beliefs, values and norms for behaviour that are separate from but embedded in the culture of the main society. Lewis gave a detailed account that best described the conditions of third world countries in 1998 as:

The people in the culture of poverty have a strong feeling of marginality, of helplessness, of dependency, of not belonging. They are like aliens in their own country, convinced that the existing institutions do not serve their interests and needs. Along with this feeling of powerlessness is a widespread feeling of inferiority, of personal unworthiness.. People with a culture of poverty have very little sense of history. They are a marginal people who know only their own troubles?. their own local conditions?. their own neighbourhood?their own way of life. Usually, they have neither the knowledge, the vision nor the ideology to see the similarities between their problems and those of others like themselves elsewhere in the world. In other words, they are not class conscious, although they are very sensitive indeed to status distinctions. When the poor become class conscious or members of trade union organizations, or when they adopt an internationalist outlook on the world they are, in my view, no longer part of the culture of poverty although they may still be desperately poor.

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Nigeria as complex phenomenon, the dominant cultural ideology shared mostly by the majority could be internalized as latent appreciation of culture of poverty. This belief system is long created and perpetuated through different leadership manipulations, policy making, as well as political system which mortgaged social, psychological and emotional status of the majority whom are poor. Nigerian people, especially those in the lower stratum were forced to live under different hardship conditions that were thought to be relatively normal and occasioned by the internal shared orientation, when indeed, it's the subconscious acceptance and practice of an unintended culture that is largely accountable for our impoverished conditions.

For instance, in 2008, Nerrill lynch report concludes that Nigeria was the least vulnerable on any of the world's major economy going by her sixty billion in reserves, healthy banking sector, and low level of external debt, between 2003 and 2007, Nigeria's real GDP had grown at more than 6% per annum, and predicted by a 2005 Goldman Sachs's report to become one of the 20 largest economy in the world by 2025 (Dungan 2009). Despite these predictions and affirmations, more than 65% Nigerians still remain poor and believed to have no hope in 2012 and beyond?, owing to contradictions in perceptions and measurement inconsistency, insecurity and political crises across the Country.

However, due to persistence of poverty in certain areas, the behavioural perspective is reinforced by the culture of poverty beliefs, which suggests that individuals create, sustain, and transmit to future generations a culture that reinforces the various social and behavioural deficiencies. According to Rodgers, (2000). The "culture of poverty" was an erroneous association of poverty with the poor themselves or on a government that keeps them dependent ?? Patterson, 2004). Similarly, it is the deficient character of the poor along with their deviant behaviour and the resultant self-reinforcing environment that restrict their access to development.

Furthermore, rising rates of divorce, female headed single parent families, teen pregnancy, drug/alcohol misuse, and criminal activity are said to reflect thesedys functional attitudes and values, relative to mainstream society, about family, education equent generations leading to a vicious cycle of poverty from which few escape (Rodgers, 2000) Despite different arguments and counter arguments, culture of poverty in present milieu, still remains a social theory that expands on the cycle of poverty. It has attracted academic and policy attention in the 1960s, but has largely been criticized by academics around the turn of the century as well (Goode and Eames, 1996; Bourgois, 2001; Small M.L., Harding D.J., Lamont M., 2010). Scholars recognize racism and isolation, rather than the "values" of the poor as the reason for potentially mal-adaptive behaviors of the poor. Despite the perceived shortcomings, the theory still remains relevant-in a way, it explains why poverty exists despite anti-poverty programs; critics of the culture of poverty argument insist that structural factors rather than individual characteristics better explain the persistence of poverty (Goode and Eames, 1996; Bourgois, 2001; Small M.L., Harding D.J., Lamont M., 2010).

What is fundamental today in subculture theory is a philosophical question of what, how and when does shared ideology become a subculture? Who creates it? Who benefits? And what rational justification is derivable from such entrenchment? The answers to these questions are controversial, contradictory and paradoxical, but what is apparent in the case of Nigeria cannot be divorced from extrinsic factors (policies imperfections, professional obligations and political instability) and intrinsic factors (egocentrism, social bigotry and greed). The combination of the duo, technically affects all other major structures in the country, which consequently snowballed into a gun powder that awaits a trigger.

### 3 Nexus of Poverty Trend between Developed and Developing Countries

Human Development Reports of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and, of late, the Millennium Development Goals progress reported the position of World Bank, on the incidence of poverty based on the dollar-a-day criterion, that generate the greatest interest and commentary in the development community. In absoluteterms, extreme income poverty has fallen substantially, with the number of people living on less than \$1.25 a day having declined from a high of 1.9 billionin 1981 to a low of 1.4 billion in 2005. In relative terms, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty dropped from 52.0 to 25.7 per cent during this period (Chen and Ravallion, 2008).

Notwithstanding the continued growth in the world's population, the absolute number of people living in extreme poverty has fallen, regardless of whether the poverty-line income threshold is set at \$1.25 or raised to \$2 or\$2.50 per day. This has occurred in the midst of an expanding global economy, which has resulted, on average, in higher per capita incomes in both developed and developing countries (Sachs, 2008; United Nations,2005a). By 2050, the world's population is projected to surpass 9 billion, with developing countries accounting for most of the 2.3 billion increase. The population of the developing world is expected to rise from 5.6 billion in 2009 to 7.9 billion in 2050.

In contrast, the population of the developed regions is expected to increase slightly, from 1.23 billion to 1.28 billion (United Nations, Department of Economics and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2009).Faster rates of decline in the number of people living on less than \$1.25 a day occurred between 1999 and 2005. A significant proportion of this decline can be largely attributed to the rise in living standards in East Asia and the Pacific which accompanied explosive economic growth, particularly in China. Other regions of the world also experience

the decline in the incidence of poverty, with the exception of Eastern Europe and poverty levels is considered normal for various reasons, poverty rates remain unacceptably high in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Although the absolute number of people living in extreme poverty has been on the rise in sub-Saharan Africa previously, however, the incidence of poverty fell marginally, from 54 to 51 per cent between 1981 and 2005, after having risen briefly to 59 per cent in 1996. This regional trend disguises large country differences. For instance, in 1981, the proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 a day had varied from a low of 3.6 per cent in Gabon to a high of 89.9 per cent in Swaziland. This pattern persisted into 2005, with the proportion in extreme poverty ranging from a low of 4.8 per cent in Gabon to a high of 86.1 per cent in Liberia.

These differences are strongly correlated with differences in respect of both economic growth and the severity of income inequality. The contraction in the global economy has also resulted in massive job losses, with the global unemployment rate having increased from 5.7 to 6 per cent between 2007 and 2008 (International Labour Organization, 2009a). Data on recent global employment trends released by the International Labour Organization (ILO) also show that based on growth projections, the number of unemployed persons globally could rise by 20 million in 2009 as a result of the economic crisis (International Labour Organization, 2009a). China and other East Asian countries accounted for 57 per cent of extremely poor people in the world. However, over a span of less than 25 years, the East Asian and Pacific region managed to reduce its global share of extremely poor people to about 23 per cent by 2005. In contrast, the share of the world's extremely poor people increased in South Asia, from 29 per cent in 1981 to 43 per cent in 2005.

Consequently, the share of poor people in sub-Saharan Africa more than doubled over the same period, having gone from 11 per cent in 1981 to 28 per cent in 2005. These changes are partly accounted for by high rates of population growth in the absence of strong economic and productive employment growth, as well as by the failure in both regions to achieve significant structural change.

## 4 IV. Extent of Poverty in Nigeria

As estimated by the World Bank, starting from 28.1 per cent in 1980, national poverty reached 66.9 per cent in 1996 before falling to 54.4 per cent in 2003/2004 - and then reaching a peak in 2010 to 69 per cent. However the population in poverty continues to rise from 18.3 million in 1980 to 68.7 million in 2003/2004 and 112.5 million in 2010. Poverty incidence is even worse when measured using international poverty line population below \$1.00 in PPP terms in 2010 was 61.2 per cent while those below \$1.25 a day by 2003/2004 was 64.41 per cent and 68 per cent in 2010. The population below \$2 a day in 2010 was 84 per cent (World Bank, 2011).

According to National Bureau of Statistics (2004) the total poor rose from 27.2 per cent in 1980 to 65.6 per cent in 1996, an increase of 141.2 per cent. Over the same period, percentage of population in core poor category rose from 6.2 to 29.3 per cent, an increase of 380 per cent. However, between 1996 and year 2004, total poor declined by 17.1 per cent to 54.4 per cent, while the core poor declined by 24.9 per cent to 22.0 per cent. It is also observed that despite the decline in the proportion of the population in poverty between 1996 and 2004, in absolute terms the population in poverty rose from 67 to 68.7 million, while those in core poverty declined by 2.2 million. It should be noted that World Bank (2001) estimated that 70.2 per cent of Nigerians live on less than \$1 per day.

The fact that over 50 per cent of total population are poor is more worrisome, coupled with the fact that policy makers are bedevilled with a number of contradictory obstacles. Studies have also shown a consistent level on statistical inconsistency in the measurement of poverty in Nigeria. This suggests the fact that recent estimate carried out for past report on poverty incidence in 2004 may have been 57.0% instead of the 54.4% reported by NBS (2005) (see Appendix 1&2).

More insight into the extent of debacle of poverty in Nigeria is gained by considering urban poverty dimension; urban poor rose from 17.2 per cent in 1980 to 58.2 per cent in 1996, but declined remarkably to 43.2 per cent in 2004. Rural poor rose from 28.3 per cent in 1980 to 69.3 per cent in 1996, this again declined, but less remarkably to 63.3 per cent in 2004. With educational dimension to poverty in Nigeria, poverty is concentrated among persons with no education and those with only primary education. Studies have demonstrated that socio-economic growth is critical to poverty reduction; yet, the approach to social equality is haphazard, unethical and deficient in transparency.

While data on Nigeria's poverty over time remains alloyed with criticisms, evidence is abundant that Nigeria's poverty has actually increased over time. Nigeria ranks third in the world for the most people living with HIV/AIDS and has the third highest death rate as a result of HIV/AIDS (CIA Factbook). More so, Nigeria's infant mortality rate has been estimated to be currently 99 per 1000 births, by implication, this means that Nigeria has the thirteenth highest infant mortality rate in the world (CIA Factbook). The infant mortality of children under the age of 5 was 189 per 1000 births in 2007. These high mortality rates are mostly due to mothers not having enough money to take care of their children (moneylessness). Many mothers are also ignorant of some preventive measures such as immunizations and vaccines, this made pertussis and tetanus (DPT) for children between 12-23 months to be estimated at 54 per cent in 2007. Many children in Nigeria die as a result of malaria, diarrhoea, tetanus and similar diseases.

As opined by Chimobi, (2010), when Nigeria is compared with Sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria seems to be better off in a few economic and social aspects but worse off in most. This is illustrated with some selected economic data in Table ???. First of all, the average Nigerian is slightly poorer in terms of GDP per capita than the average person in Sub-Saharan Africa. Second, the life expectancy of an average Nigerian at birth has been estimated

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to be as low as 47 years, which is again slightly topped by that of Sub-Saharan Africa (51 years). In terms of gross primary enrolment in 2006, Nigeria was with 96.2 percent slightly better off than Sub-Saharan Africa (93.2 per cent), Nigeria's below that of Sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria's immunization rates for both DPT and measles are relatively low compared to Sub-Saharan Africa which rates as high as 72percent in DPT and 71 percent in measles, while Nigeria's immunization rates are still at 54 percent and 62 percent, respectively for DPT and measles.

Without fear of contradictions, Nigeria faces mass poverty and this has serious social, political, economic, and security consequences that cannot be compromised. Consequently, situation in Nigeria has however been made worse by the rapid population growth rate of about 2.83 percent since the 1990s giving rise to a high dependency ratio and pressure on resources in several areas. From the table above, it could be seen poverty increased from 22% to 51.4% from 1980 to 1989 and drops slightly in 1992; it rose again from 71.7%, drops slowly to 63.3% and rose again to 73.2 from 1996 to 2010 in rural Nigeria. In urban Nigeria, the poverty measure was estimated at 28.3%, which rose to 37.8% between 1980 and 1985. The trend increased from 37.5 to 59. Although, data on poverty is many times controversial, from the above chart, we could confirm that data provided by the United States Central Intelligence Agency's World Factbook (henceforth CIA Factbook), postulated that 70 percent of the Nigerian population lived below the poverty line in 2007. However, evidence are bound from other case studies and qualitative research indicating a higher perception, knowledge and outcome of poverty from more than 80% of Nigerians, in spite of different poverty alleviation programs designed and implemented by Nigeria government.

What is significant is that while international parity could be a reliable yardstick especially among developed nations whose GDP could be measured using standard economic measures, such measures could be generalized on the basis of validity and reliability of instruments used, conversely, in sub-Sahara Africa and in Nigeria in particular, many factors could be attributed to unstable statistical measurement and inaccurate analysis, which rather make survey analysis as well as intellectual contributions counterproductive. However, general perception posits that more than twothirdmajority wallop in abject poverty in Nigeria, owing to policy imperfections and misappropriations.

Could Policies address Poverty in the face of Complications in Nigeria?

## 5 V. Summary and Conclusion

Poverty is galloping in Nigeria (Oshewolo, 2011), despite several attempts by successive governments to abate the problem, unemployment, malnutrition, illiteracy, low status of women, environmental degradation and limited access to social and health services, including reproductive health services are the consequential effects (Aina, 2012). Sequel to this development, Nigeria is now considered as one the 20th poorest Countries in the world (Okeshola, 2009) and the recent U WIN, all to no avail, therefore, there is urgent need for a pro-poor reform agenda, where relative and subjective analysis of inequality could be resolved and uncompromising policy directives strictly adhered, with a vision to address the scourge of social inclusiveness and exclusiveness in Nigeria.



Figure 1:

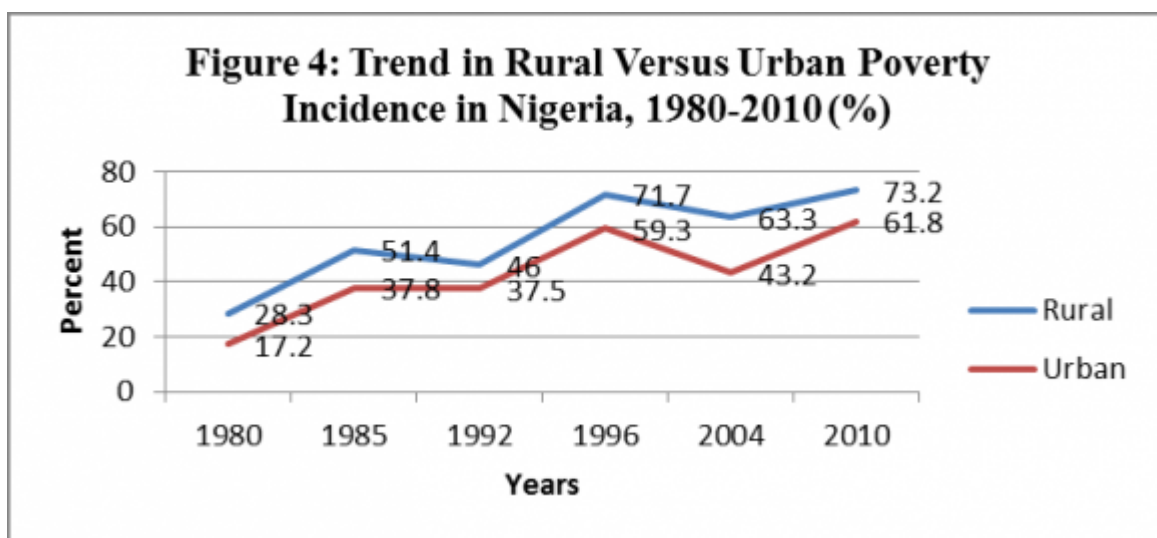
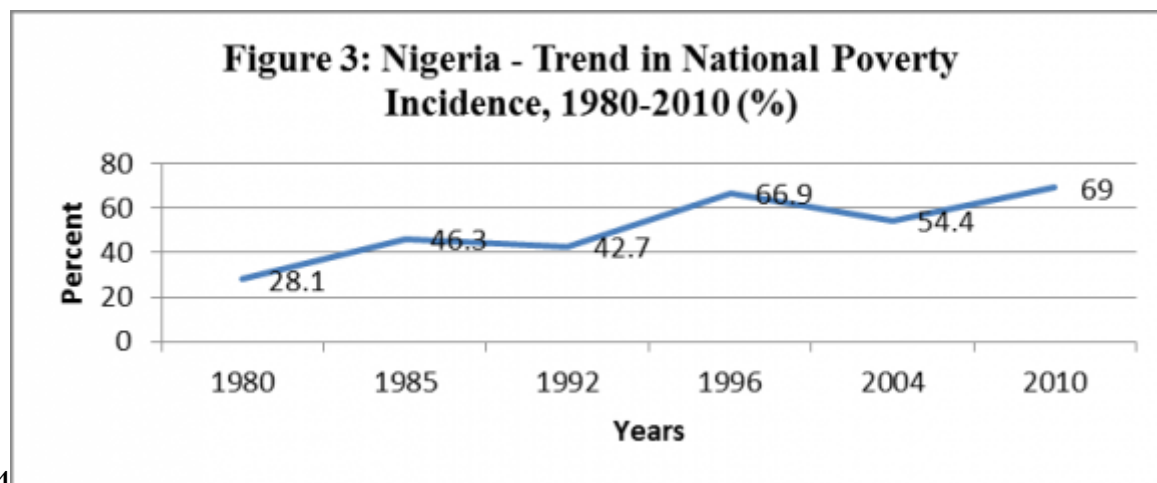


Figure 2:



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Figure 3: Figure 4 :



Figure 4:

[Note: Source: World Bank (2008) World Development Indicators 2008, CD-Rom.]

Figure 5:

Figure 6:





- Approximately, 47-48% (estimated to about 15 million persons) of labour force remains unemployed (Aina, 2012)
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