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The Dimensions of Poverty and its Effects on Nigeria's National Development

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Abstract- This paper examines the dimensions of poverty and how it affects national development in Nigeria. It therefore, views poverty as a phenomenon that affects the socio-economic and political conditions of its victims in both developed, developing and underdeveloped countries. Relying on qualitative data, this paper used the political economy approach to argue that the underdevelopment of the productive forces occasioned by politics of primitiveness orchestrated by the political class is largely the cause of the poverty in Nigeria. It is against this analytical angle that the paper reveals that poverty in Nigeria has resulted to inequality, social injustice, conflict, crime and consequently leading to political apathy and sometime vote buying during elections. With these dimensions, it concludes that the nature and character of poverty in the country pose challenges to Nigeria's national development. Because sustainable national development cannot be achieved in a poverty ridden nation hence, the menaces of poverty are recipes for anti-nation building culture. It recommends among others that the poor should be involved in the designing and implementation of policies that concern them due to the fact that they know better the challenges facing them in their various communities.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a global phenomenon that affects the socio-economic and political conditions of its people be it in developed, developing and underdeveloped countries. Therefore, it is a dynamic process of socio economic, political or other deprivations which affect individual households or communities and usually results in lack of access to basic necessities of life. It affects many aspects of the human conditions, including the physical, moral and the psychological.

Worthy of note is that available statistics have shown that poverty in poor countries is absolute and majorly witnessed in the rural areas. In Nigeria for instance, the rural population that constitute about 73% of the country's population (Presidential Report, 1999) are backward and underdeveloped. According to Aderonmu cited in Yakubu & Jonathan, (2010), a visit to any rural settlement in Nigeria will reveal dirt and unmotorable roads, women and children walking barefooted and trekking long distance to get water and firewood, pupil studying under trees, a dilapidated and

ill equipped health centers and scores of poverty driven problems. Suffice it to say that the category of people that suffers most and are confronted with many challenges and have no power to improve their situation because of ill-health, poor education and lack of access to many opportunities available to them are the rural dwellers. They are extremely poor in almost all aspects of life and cannot contribute positively towards meaningful development in spite of the fact that they constitute the majority in terms of population.

Thus, the above conceptualization of poverty suggests that it could be a recipe for depression, frustration, low consciousness, jingoism, conflict and crime among people. If poverty in Nigeria is actually a product of political primitiveness (Ochoga, 2012) then a country with low patriotism and lack of consciousness among citizens is likely to face poor national development frontiers. Therefore, the problematic analytical angle of this paper is predicated on the extent to which the dimensions of poverty in Nigeria as permeated by political primitivism impacted on Nigeria's national development. This is because it is uncertain whether dimension of poverty affects national development.

II. CONCEPTUALIZING POVERTY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

a) Poverty

A universal definition of poverty is elusive, largely because it affects many aspects of human conception including physical, moral and psychological. Different criteria have therefore, been used to conceptualize poverty. Some analyses follow the conventional views of poverty as a result of insufficient income for securing basic goods and services. Others view poverty in part, as a function of education, health, life efficacy, child mortality lack of food etc. Lynch (1994); identify the poor, using the criteria of the levels of consumption and expenditure.

It became more prominent in 1975 when the Nigeria Economic Society Annual Conference focused on the subject matter. Much concern about poverty came into focus when the international oil price crashed in 1986 and there was an international slump with all these phenomenon mentioned above, poverty became severe between late 1980s and 90s which attracted a number of scholars who have written a lot of literature on the subject matter.

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Balogun (1999) considered poverty in absolute terms as a situation where the population or section of the population is able to meet only its subsistence food, clothing and shelter in order to maintain minimum standard of living. Olowononi (1997) defined poverty as living in a substandard environment characterized by slump, squalor, and grossly inadequate social amenities such as medical facilities, school and recreational facilities. He further added that it implies low calories intakes, poor housing conditions, and inadequate health facilities, poor quality of educational facilities, low life expectancy, unemployment and underdevelopment. Onimode (1995) went further to identify poverty with people's inability to influence their environment which manifests itself in form of little or no education and inadequate access to land.

According to the World Bank (1999), poverty is hunger; lack of shelter; being sick and being unable to go to school; not knowing how to read; not being able to speak properly; not having a job; fear for the future; losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water; powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom.

Aku, Ibrahim and Bulus (1997) analyzed poverty from five dimensions of deprivation:

- i). Personal and physical deprivation experienced as a result of health, literacy, nutritional and educational disability and lack of self-confidence.
- ii). Economic deprivation drawn from lack of access to property income, asserts, factors of production and finance.
- iii). Cultural deprivation in terms of lack of access to values, beliefs, knowledge, information and attitudes which deprives the people of control of their own destinies, and
- iv). Political deprivation in terms of lack of political voice to participate in decision making affects their lives.

From the Marxist perspective, Ochoga (2012:17) conceptualize poverty as a 'situation where individuals are unable to afford calorie-intake, standard accommodation, quality education, health care services, and other basic needs as a result of lack of substantive income arising from the underdevelopment of the productive forces'. However, the conceptualization of poverty in this paper is defined as the inability to provide or secure basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing etc. This inability might be due to lack of development of content ability or mismanagement which in turn affects national development. What then is national development?

b) National Development

The definition of development is complex. Sometimes, scholars end up describing instead of defining the term development. Development can be defined as "collective activities by any human society directed at reducing the totality of perceived obstacles to a higher standard of living; thus maximizing the

quality of lives of its citizen" (Sen cited in Ahmed 2013:87). Development is objectively to give the people a comfortable and better life. According to (Ahmed, 2013:87), Development is conceptualized as a gradual advance or growth through progressive change. He asserts further that, it is a gradual differentiation of an ecological community. The term is also used to describe the process of economic and social transformation within a country. Development entails a progressive prosperity, and progressive changes in political, social and economic life of a country for the better life of all.

For Rodney, development is a many sided process. He asserts that;

Development in human society is many sided process. At the level of individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, self-discipline and responsibility and material well-being... while at the level of social group therefore, development implies an increased capacity to regulate both internal and external relationship (Rodney, 1973:1)

If the above postulation by Rodney is anything to go by, it can then be argued that increased skills and capacity, self-discipline and responsibility and material well-being are indicators for development at the individual level. While at the social group level, increasing capacity to control internal and external relationship is development. In order words, with the notion of increase, advance, progress and growth from above conceptualization of development, development is not and should not be limited to time, periods or context. For example, what might have been considered as development in the 1980s might not be development in the 21st century, because what was considered as development over two or three decades ago might be seen as traditional, not modern, outdated or incompatible with the contemporary situation, events or phenomena, what citizens of a particular country anticipate is continuous progressive changes. As time changes the ideology, perspective, tools and methods of development should also change to meet up with peoples' demands and needs because development is a continuous improvement in the quality life of the citizens, (Adamu, Haruna & Ibrahim 2017: 433-434).

In the opinion of (Adamu & Rasheed 2016:49), national development therefore, refers to the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people, for example, by providing social amenities like quality education, infrastructure, medical care and social services. They asserted further that national development could also be seen as the ability of a government of a country to ensure justice, equity and equality, promote the application of rule of law and propagate the notion of fundamental human rights which are indicators or prospects to increased and enhanced living condition, income of the citizens, availability of opportunities of every kind to its citizens etc. This is because, without justice and equity, no nation can progress and become advanced. Therefore,

national development is "Quality life for all" and quality life is attainable only where justice, equity and appropriate procedures are practiced which will further stimulate development in a country.

c) *Theorizing the problematic*

For the purpose of this study, Political Economy approach was adopted as a theoretical framework for the analysis. According to Hoogvelt (2001:3) 'political economy' was first coined by Montecretien de Watteville, a French writer, in 1615 (See also Onimode, 1985). De Watteville himself saw political economy as 'the science of wealth acquisition common to the state as well as the family. But de Watteville wrote in the mercantilist period when the economy was meant to serve the power needs of the augment revenue for the other states. Thus, accumulation was meant to augment revenue for the authorities to effectively prosecute wars against their enemies. The import of this is that national welfare was defined as national security if not national warfare.

In 1776, Adams Smith wrote his treatise: An Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations. This treatise redefined political economy. By his analysis, wealth accumulation was no longer exclusively for the state and its authorities. National wealth was indeed the people's wealth. National wealth was in the first place, the product of individual labour. His main thesis was that the pursuit of individual self-interest would lead to public or collective good. So, men were supposed to freely express their economic potentials (the ability to produce materials and service) in order to optimally achieve that public good, through it was never the original goal of each individual producer. Yet it must be acknowledged that Smith focused mainly on political territorial acquisition or accumulation of wealth rather than on individual accumulation. The individual was only a source of labour for the wealth that was available for accumulation. If man exchanged, he did so only as for the benefits to him-so the invisible hand, the best, regulator of the economy. Man's natural propensity 'to truck, barter, and exchange' which alone sets the economy working is captured in the following argument by Smith:

But man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren and it is in vain for him to expect it from their benevolence only. He will be more likely to prevail if he can interest them it is self-love in his favour and show them what he requires of them. Whoever offers to another a bargain of the any kind, and you shall have this which you want, is the meaning of every such offer; and it is this manner that we obtain from one another the far greater part of those good offices which we in need of (Skinner, 1970"117-8).

But apparently, Smith was a true son of his age, the age of enlightenment when human liberty knew no bounds, at least intellectually. So, he idealistically envisaged an exchange system where the labourer

produced mainly what he was at liberty to produce for what he subsistently and socially needed. He thus overlooked the social implications especially the contradictions resultant from the system of production and contribution that could possibly obstruct the 'invisible hands'.

If Adams Smith is reckoned to be the father of liberal economics which emphasizes the markets over and above the state whose role is only to ensure that the market is obstructed in its operation, he can equally be said to be a precursor of Marx also. He was the originator of surplus value, which he saw as what was left over of one's produce from labour after consuming what is needed to be consumed. Smith spotted the cradle of accumulation in this surplus; Marx traces the origin of capital to this surplus from product of labour.

The entry of Karl Marx into the debate has dramatically transformed the discourse of political economy. To Marx, the state is an economic system where the struggle for accumulation takes place between individuals and between groups. The groups, the class, are however more critical to the struggle. The individual is only important as a source of labour for production or for ownership of the means of production. Marx used the logic of dialectic to argue the thesis for historical materialism. Which holds that through the times history has been made of struggles and resolution of struggles between classes? However each resolution, while instituting a new order, ushers in contradiction inherent in that new order. Thus another struggle begins. The selection citation below provides so much regarding Marx's thought on this matter:

In the social production of their lives, men enter into define relations that are in dispensation and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces... At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of the society come in conflict with the existing relations of production... From the development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters, then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is the more or less rapidly transformed... In broad outline Asiatic, ancient, feudal, and modern bourgeois mode of production can be designated as progressive epochs in the economic formation of society. The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production (Marx, 1972:138).

So, history has assumed a notion of its own which however shall terminate in the attainment of communism, an economic system where there shall no longer be the exploitation of man by man. Marx's major point of departure is that accumulation of wealth has never been and cannot be in public interest as suggested by Adam Smith. The exploitation of labour supplied by individual workers is never so free such as to achieve the public good. In the existent social relations of production, the labourer is not better than

the slave, the serf or the bondman of yore. In other words, labour is made to produce for the good of the class in control- the dominant....but not for the toiling lot whose only possession is their labour, but for it is unpaid to ensure profit. He further submits:

....capita and the capitalist is merely personified and functions in the process of production solely as the agent of capital, in its corresponding social process of production, pumps a definite quantity of surplus-labour without an equivalent, and in essence it always remains forced labour- no matter how much it may seem to result from free contractual agreement. This surplus-labour appears as surplus-value, and this surplus value exists as a surplus-product (Marx, 1972:152).

This is the origin of capital accumulation as envisaged by Marx. On the whole, Marx wrote the bourgeois class that has just overthrown the feudal system to establish the industrial society, and of the proletariat that was also a product of kind of society. To him, neither the state nor the market was capable of offering the public goods under capitalist economics, contrary to what Smith expected.

The analytical angle of the foregoing is that, it is in the nature of capitalism to operate in a zero-sum manner in its process of accumulation, which loses at the other end. It produces wealth for the one but peonage for the other. So as an economic system, from mercantilism to globalization, capitalism logically accounts for wealth and poverty from the opposite ends of accumulation. It can only be inferred. 'The parallel existence and mutual interaction of the state and market in the modern world create political economy' (Gilpin, 1987:8). He has been able to see the link between 'exchange' and 'authority', 'power' and 'wealth', 'power' and 'money', etc. Though he does not talk of accumulation so directly, he has not missed the point concerning 'how the state and its associated political processes affect the production and distribution of wealth...' (Gilpin, 1987: 9). To Spero (1977: 32), only liberalism has been responsible for separating politics from economics at mercantilism, but Ochoga (2012:345) counteract this notion by arguing that politics and economy have an inseparable link and as such, the nature and character of the interface could determine the rate of poverty and other indices of development in a state. Therefore, the foregoing conceptualization of the political economy approach serves as a guide in this paper to establish the dimensions of poverty in Nigeria and its effects on Nigeria's national development. What then are the causes of poverty in Nigeria?

d) *Poverty in Nigeria and its Causes*

As an overview, poverty is a worldwide phenomenon; it has been observed that Nigeria is one of the poorest countries in the world. The situation has reached an unpredictable level while shows that more than 49% of the population lives below the line, which

67% of the poor are extremely poor (Obi, 2011). The cause of poverty in Nigeria however is paradoxical as asserted by Odusola (1997:4) that Nigeria is a rich country inhibited by poor people-poverty in the midst of plenty. Odusola's statement is predicated on the fact that Nigeria is richly endowed in human, physical and natural resources, land, oil and gas, forest, a virile and versatile population. In spite of all these notwithstanding the incidence of poverty in the country is very high. The advent of oil in the economy in early 1970s contributed immensely to the economic development plan and increase in government revenue.

The glut on the oil prices at the international oil market and the consequent drop in oil prices in the early 1980s marked the beginning of serious deterioration in welfare and an increase in absolute poverty in Nigeria with the oil boom fizzling out and government revenue levels dwindling, average per capita income fell, private consumption per capita as well as wages both agricultural and nonagricultural ventures in real terms fell; welfare, needless to say, was on a downward trend; life expectancy at birth was 4% compared to the world average of 66% infant mortality was 96 per 1000 live birth, average calorie intake was far below what is recommended as minimum by Food and Agricultural Organization (CBN, 2018:7).

In 2005, there was a study by the CBN and World Bank on poverty assessment in Nigeria for poor rural householders. According to the report, the food intakes of the surveyed rural householders indicated an extreme poverty situation as high calorie food items such as "gari" dominated the householder's nutritional types. There is generally low and inadequate provision of basic infrastructures such as energy, portable water supply, housing and transportation in rural areas. Majority of the householders in the rural areas were living in low quality mud-bunch-housing types, made up of mud and corrugated iron roofing sheets. Generally, the mud-bacha houses lacked basic conveniences such as toilets and bathrooms, which such householders used pit/pail latrines, and bush/dung hills, majority of the householders trekked long distance because of non-availability of public transportation and lack of money to assist them, (CBN, 2018).

Olowononi (1997:9) argues that, hazards such as incidence of diarrhea and the malnourished children in urban and rural areas, the use of contaminated water and poor sanitary condition are associated with the increasingly high rates of diseases. Uniamikagbo (2013:7) sharing the same view with Olowononi, said in terms of safe water, those in the rural areas only have unsafe sources of water like streams, wells, ponds, etc. This has caused a lot of anxiety when considered that large proportion of Nigerians live in the rural areas. Nigeria's poverty situation on geographical basis could be in inequality emanating from unequal access to

economic opportunities, increased sharing from 2000 to 2005. It is noted by the World Bank (2018:8) that:

21%, 40% of the populations were poor in the (1) southern, (2) middle belt and (3) northern states respectively. This could be as a result of differences in resource endowment. Experience has shown that the incidence of poverty could be found among the following groups in the urban areas in descending order as follows: Farmers 35%, apprentice and students 25%, junior wage earner like factory worker, clerks and messengers 22% and others 18%. Also, the degree of poverty has increased with the age of the heads of household. People whose age group falls between 56 and 68 years are mostly illiterate households. It was found that 68% of the poor households in rural areas had no formal education, while 42% of those households residing in urban arrears had no formal education.

The degree of prostitution also increased among illiterates and unemployed women. Anyanwie (2009) and (Ochoga 2012:347) added that "poverty is either moderate or extreme", the order of ranking is north, south and middle agro-climatic zones. In summary therefore, this paper agrees with the late political economist Onimode (1995:34) that 'the statistics of rising poverty are flaring on the streets. This rising number of able-bodied beggars of all ages among males and females is simply deplorable. Scavenging for food in dustbins and at refuse dump is regular sighted in major towns and cities.' All these features are concrete evidence of the prevalence and severity of poverty in our society. With the current global rating, the poverty condition in the country is not better off (Global Poverty Index, 2019).

With the magnitude and spread of poverty and the desire to reduce its size and curb the spread, there is need to identify the causes of poverty. Identifying this will facilitate the process of poverty planning and management. Although, the basic causes of poverty can be easily explained, even with causal observation. However, specific theories have been adopted in the analysis of the causes of poverty. According to the United Nations (1995), and the World Bank (1990), poverty is manifested in various ways, including lack of sustainable livelihood, hunger and malnutrition, ill health, and basic needs. Yahiel (1993:9) reiterates that the causes of poverty include:

- i). Structural causes that are more permanent and defendant on a host of exogenous factors such as limited resources, lack of skills, location disadvantage and other social and political factors.
- ii). Transitional causes occasioned by structural adjustment reforms and changes in domestic economic policies that may result in price changes and unemployment. Natural calamities such as droughts and man-made disaster such as wars, environmental degradation and so on, also includes transitional poverty.

As observed by Obadan (1997:8), the main factors that cause poverty in Nigeria include: inadequate access to employment opportunities, inadequate access to means of supporting rural development in poor regions; poor access to markets where goods and services can be sold, low endowment of human capital and destruction of material resources leading to environmental degradation. On their parts, Afonja and Ogwumike (1995:32) observed that "several factors act and react upon one another to limit the upward mobility of individuals in the society and keep them perpetually in vicious cycle of abject poverty". The forces according to them can be categorized under two broad groupings, those that can be attributed to the low level and rate of economic growth and the distribution of the national income and those that arise from market imperfection in its entire ramification. The interaction of the above variables places a large segment of Nigeria in the vicious circle of poverty which is characterized by low productivity that leads to low per capita income. Low capita income result in low level of saving per head. The low level of saving leads to low level of capital accumulation per head which further leads to low productivity (Todaro, 1992). To Ochoga (2012:278) the disarticulation of the productive forces is responsible for poverty in Nigeria. He further contend that"

the causes of poverty in Nigeria is rooted in two analytical angle, first, the poverty has its root from the premature incorporation of the Nigerian economy into the global economy without having sustainable industrial base to withstand the contradictions of capitalism. Therefore, the government becomes the highest employer of labour as most industries have collapsed and as such unemployment is prevalent in the country. Secondly, since the productive forces are underdeveloped, many Nigerians (politicians) seen politics as a means to an end and as such allocation of authoritative resources are permeated by primitive accumulation, patrimonial consideration and primordial sentiment, these to a large extent contribute the causes of poverty in Nigeria.

Ochoga's (2012) thesis of linking collapsed productive forces and political primitiveness is an analytic angle upon which this paper seeks to x-ray the dimensions of poverty and its effects on Nigeria's national development.

III. DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY IN NIGERIA AND ITS EFFECT ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The preceding sections have established that the nature and character of poverty in Nigeria is a product of unproductive and anti-peoples interface between politics and economy in the country. Against is this backdrop, some dimensions of poverty have been identified by Adamu (2008) which include the following:

- a. *Poverty of material well-being*: This is conceived as lack of basic necessities for the sustenance of life. This comprises of food, clothing and shelter. In Nigeria and even in Africa, majority of people are living below the level of subsistence. The economic strangulation in the country has also made the material well-being of the majority of the people a very serious affair.
- b. *Poverty of ideas*: This approach is divided into two levels, that of the leader and the subjects. For the leaders, there is always an avalanche of good ideas at the disposal of leaders. Most often than not, however, leaders tend to act in manners suggestive of their inability to assess what are good ideas. The result is that of different and uninspiring manner. Most of them have sailed the ship of state administration. On the part of the subjects, the poverty of ideas is exemplified here as lack of good judgment in supporting good policies and programmes that can lead to national development.
- c. *Poverty of courage*: This dimension of poverty is typified by situation where there is a timid citizenry, very apprehensive and cautious in standing against lapses on the part of those in power or telling the government what it has done wrong. Rather, the citizenry down on to the leaders become sycophants with the attendant danger that the perception of leaders as to the acceptability of their policies and programmes become distorted, (Adamu, 2008:42-43).

It is worthy of note that of all the facets of poverty identified above, the poverty of material well-being ranked the most prominent, precious and almost all embarrassing. It is observed that in Nigeria, material poverty has greatly impeded the national development. It should be borne in mind that the perpetual struggle for existence has always been on how to conquer poverty. Consequently, such major concern of matters of mere survival, a party set into practice in a given country, the masses are usually and easily brain washed and left with the inability of choosing the right representatives, objective choice is seldom a consideration. More often than not, various forms of inducements and gratifications, which provide very temporal relief from the scourge of poverty, are given central attention in making their democratic choice. From the foregoing, each of the dimensions of poverty is capable of posing challenges to national development.

IV. CHALLENGES OF POVERTY TO NIGERIA'S NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

There is no gainsaying the fact that poverty has impeded national development in many ways since Nigeria returned to civil rule in 1999 after many years of military rule. The above fact could be seen as a result of

the implementation of Structural Adjustment programmes in the 1980s which gave a leverage to confirm the statement put forward by some scholars that poverty is as a result of lack of meaningful development.

It is fundamental to note that expectations that greeted Nigeria's recommencement of another lap of democratic governance in 1999 was very high but was dashed as the expectations placed on the new democratic regime to alleviate the extreme level of poverty in the country has remained an illusion with the continuous inability of successive governments to deliver dividends of democracy to the people. It is interesting to note that the first noticeable sign of challenge that poverty posed to the Nigeria's democracy was the rise in crisis of legitimacy on the new government. Consequently, this created the room for the citizens not only to openly challenge the authority of the ruling elite and the viability of the Nigerian state, but also opened up the space for expression of suppressed ethnic demands bottled up by years of repressive military rule (Metumara, 2010:92).

It is worthy of note that when poverty is severe, it creates unwarranted socio-economic and political competition and the negative impact of this competition is insecurity associated with limited job opportunities and social services" (Metumara, 2010:96). It is on record that since Nigeria got her political independence in 1960, its economy has remained largely dualistic and monolithic, depending on one primary product for export (Ogunlela, and Ogungbile, 2006:2). This situation has in no small way halted the development of productive forces occasioned by economic wastage, mismanagement and lack of judicious use of available resources by the political elite. Due to the country's mono-culturalism and the predominant role of the state in development, the competitive advantage has reduced minimally when compared to other countries of the Western nations. The increasing rents and revenues of over \$231 billion which accrued to the Nigerian state from 1970-1999 (Ross, 2003:2; Nna and Igwe, 2010:133) as well as the predominance of the state as the "main employer, provider and distributor of resources" (Akokpatri, 2008:90) made the control of state power a highly lucrative enterprise. The above is responsible for the politics of kleptocracy and prebendalism which emanated from the struggle for the control of state's scarce resources. It is imperative to stress here that in the presence of all the identified issues and challenges artificially created by poverty are capable of hindering the attainment of national development in Nigeria.

It is not an exaggeration to conclude that the current spate of poverty in Nigeria has given prominence to inequality, social injustice and consequently resulted to political apathy. The rising profile of poverty in Nigeria as observed by the National Bureau of Statistics (2007:38) states that the number of

people living in poverty increased from 39.07 million in 1992 to 70million in 2004. Similarly, the UNDP states that about 83.9 per cent of Nigerians live below two US Dollars a day (Nna & Igwe, 2010: 133). This poverty profile is further complicated by staggering and alarming levels of inequality as highlighted by (Oshewolo 2010:267) that 70.2 percent of the Nigerian population lives on less than \$1 a day, while 90.8 percent lives on less than \$2 a day. The total income earned by the richest 20 percent of the population is 55.7 percent, while the total income earned by the poorest 20 percent is 4.4 percent.

Another worrisome dimension of poverty situation in Nigeria in this republic is that of powerlessness which is characterized by dependence on others thereby having no voice and choice. In line with the above, Mattes, et al, (2003:35) asserts that the poor "are regularly victimized by public officials and encounter higher levels of crime. As a consequence, they are forced to rely on informal networks and associations" for survival. Meanwhile, as the state constantly violates the right of the citizen and deprive them social justice and economic opportunity, the people have come to perceive the state as predatory and evil that should be avoided and feared and consequently, they (citizens) are not concerned about working in any way towards national development.

Suffice it to say that poverty in Nigeria has contributed in no small way to corruption which adversely affects the country's national development. It is important to note that politics in Nigeria has become a "Zero Sum Game" which simply means-winner takes all. This statement cannot be divorced from the deepening contradictions perpetuated by the Structural Adjustment Programme which to many, contributed to worsening poverty, unemployment, starvation and hunger and have forced the people to seek for the need to go and search for their daily needs via all other available means apart from the societal designated means.

Fundamentally, it is public knowledge that the rate of corruption and abuse of public office in Nigeria is quite embarrassing looking at the degree it has now reached. This is why scholars such as (Olorode, 2006:5, (Oko, 2008:33) have argued that corruption and the desire for self-advantage have overwhelmed the ideal of public service and turned public institutions into crucibles of sloth, avarice and mediocrity. Poor leadership, shaggy government policies and poverty continue to expose public servants to control, manipulation and corrupt practices). Since the dominant source of private wealth is public treasury, looting public treasury will be, and had become, a major way of promoting privatization (Olorode, 2006:5).

From the above proposition, this paper holds that one of the factors responsible for extreme poverty, hunger and starvation in Nigeria in spite of its huge resources is the challenge of responsible and

responsive leadership. According to former President of Nigeria (Olusegun Obasanjo, cited in Alechenu, 2013), leadership deficit in Nigeria had robbed it of meaningful development and has become a clog on the nation's wheel of progress. This is to say that most of the challenges befalling Nigeria can be traced largely to poor and lack competent and purposeful leadership be it political, traditional and even at the family level. The above statement is unconnected with the fact that most leaders that have emerged in the history of Nigeria have been ill equipped and have not been able to identify the actual problems facing the nation.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper has interrogated the dimensions of poverty and how it affects national development in Nigeria. It views poverty as a phenomenon that affects the socio-economic and political conditions of nations and their citizenry. It has been established that poverty is a recipe for social injustice and crime. And as such, the worsening dimensions of poverty in the country pose threat to Nigeria's national development in moral, economic and political ramifications. Based on the analysis and findings of this paper, the following recommendations are hereby made:

There is need for government to device strategy for eliminating poverty. It should focus sharply on and regard as its primary responsibility to the challenge of seeing the development of the country as essentially a human development.

The poor should be involved in the design and implementation of policies and programmes that concern them because they know better the challenges facing them in their various communities. This should be seen as a task because as poverty increases in level so it increases the chances of posing direct challenge to the nation's economic stability.

There is also urgent need for Nigerian government to give credence to technological advancement as the world today has become a global village as a result of the development of Information and Communication Technology. By so doing, there could be partnership among the people so as to enhance sustainable development via the people's ownership of productive resources or assets.

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