

Caring for the Poor and the Less Privilege: An Inhibition to an Eventual War (Nigeria as a Case Study)

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Abstract:- Poverty is a subject of discussion that has given concerns to the nation of the world, and it presents great damage by being a significant obstacle to the growth of the economy. It has eaten deep into the political, social, health and physical well being of individuals that it left the majority of the populace destitute and at the same time deprived them the essentials of life like care, proper feeding, access to good food and medical facilities. When poverty grows at an alarming rate like what we have in the country, it brings about war, conflict, terrorism, prostitution and armed robbery amidst other negative vices. This study aimed at examining the care of the poor as a way of inhibiting war. Various indicators suggest that poverty is a significant obstacle to Nigeria's socio-economic development. The concept of poverty was critically and adequately examined with definitions from diverse researchers about what poverty is and the indices that are used in measuring poverty. The study ex-rayed alarming facts and statistics about poverty, causes of poverty, links between poverty and war and care for the poor. Some of the recommendations are that efforts should be intensified to care for the rural populace as they are mostly deprived of basic amenities and infrastructural facilities like good roads, schools, hospitals, pipe-borne water among others. The Federal Government of Nigeria should do all within their powers to venture into activities that would improve the economy which would in turn help in the reduction of poverty, invariably increasing the care for the poor and the less privileged. When all these are done, it inhibits war in society.

Keywords:- Poverty, Less Privilege, Inhibition, War.

I. INTRODUCTION

The poor would always remain with us as a nation, and it is because of their presence that we talk about poverty which invariably has a link with the less privileged. Poverty is a scourge that has eaten deep into the fabrics of our country that brings about the increase of suffering, diseases, death and increase of the less privileged in the society. It is pertinent to know that there are things that could be done to reduce the statistics and one of such strategies is to show a high level of care to the poor populace and the less privileged population. It is in doing this that those dangers like war and social vices like armed

robbery could be averted. It is also imperative we look into the background of poverty, the causes and some statistics depicting the poverty level in Nigeria and as well look at the strategies to care for the poor and the less privileged (overcoming poverty) to inhibit the outbreak of war.

In the world today, poverty is a grievous problem that has affected the socio-economic sphere of society. It is evident in the way it affects the social, economic, religious and financial strata which make people live their below the required standard of living. It is also evident in the inability of people to be able to survive and cater to their basic needs, and this makes them unstable emotionally and mentally. At this point, the less privileged and the poor becomes liable to be attacked by sickness, natural disasters, abuse, conflict, war and exploitation (Chikelu, 2016).

The effects of poverty vary from one community to another, and when it comes to the class of very poor people, the condition is always fatal. It is to avoid the effects of the poverty that some of the poor and less privileged people seek to do all within their powers to survive the menace (Emuedo, 2012). The poverty rate in Nigeria as of 2013 was 47.6%, and in 2016, the figure increased to 53% (World Bank, 2016). It was also recorded that at almost the same period, Nigeria ranked on the human poverty index (HPI) was 54th and made to be the 20th poorest country in the globe. Nigeria was placed at the 40th position from below on human development index (HDI) which have not experienced any remarkable improvement (Chikelu, 2016).

The number of people living below the \$1.90 a day benchmark in 2017 was pegged as 98million or 53.5% (MPO, 2019) and in the year 2018, Nigeria's multidimensional poverty incidence was 51.4%, and it had an intensity of 56.6% (UNDP and OPHI, 2019). It was also gathered that data from the Brookings Institute showed that Nigeria presently has the highest number of people living in extreme poverty (Akume, 2019). Evidence in research studies has established that out of the 98 million people living in extreme poverty; it is possible that there would be six people who get into extreme poverty per minute (Awojobi, 2019). It was also predicted that of the 98million living in poverty 85 million Nigerians that the poor people might end up spending the entire life below the poverty line (Zuhumnan, 2018; UN-DESA, 2019).

In Nigeria, it has been observed that there are correlations between poverty and education, occupation, age, gender and household size (Nigerian Human Development Report [NHDR], 2013). Nigerian Human Development Report (2016) stated that poverty is endemic, real and dangerous. Food, housing and health pose as a significant challenge in Nigeria. The Human Development Index (HDI) figure for Nigeria has been placed amidst the least in the world since 1980. The HDI rate increased to 49.4%, 49.9% and 51.3% in 2005, 2006 and 2007 respectively, and these were the highest value in the country that was recorded between 1990 and 2007 (NHDR, 2013).

The measure of the HDI for 2015 was 0.527 which placed Nigeria in the low development category and 152nd position out of 188 countries and territories making Nigeria be ranked among the poorest countries in the world (NHDR, 2016). The vast numbers of the population have little or no access to the social amenities that are readily available in rich. Between 2005 and 2015, Nigeria's HDI rose to 0.527 from 0.466, which was an increase of 13.1%. Between 1990 and 2015, life expectancy at birth in Nigeria rose by 7.0 years and the average years of schooling rose by 0.8 years and expected years of schooling increased by 3.3 years (NHDR, 2016).

It is very glaring from the indices above that there would always be the less privileged among us, and since nothing serious has been done to cater for them, there would always be the incidence of terrorism, war, famine, robbery and other social vices. It is, therefore, the concern of this paper to come up with concerted efforts to avert poverty, tackle it seriously and find ways to care for the less privileged so the society would live in peace and prosperity.

II. THE CONCEPT OF POVERTY

Poverty is conceptualised and examined in terms of income or consumption poverty (UNECE, 2017), so it revolves around relativity and absolute tendencies (Mood & Jonson, 2016; Development Initiative, 2016). The estimation of poverty reveals the decomposition of the population, capture the social capital issues and how the poor and the less privileged view of poverty (Olatomide, 2012).

Bhalla & Lapeyre (2016) linked poverty to the concept of social exclusion that is evident in either a country known as developed or developing. Bradshaw & Main (2016) in their studies also touched an essential aspect of poverty known as child poverty that dealt with how children become less privileged as a result of poverty. Room (2016) also analysed the issue of poverty in the European Community, and it was also observed that there is the incidence of poverty in developed communities.

Poverty, as it is, would remain a topical issue in Africa (Beegle, Christiaensen, Dabalen & Gaddis, 2016). It has also been observed that poverty has links with social

protection (Barrientos & Hulme, 2016) and issues related to gender (Shah, 2016). Poverty has also been seen as one of the factors that have an impact in the maintenance of health (Pearson, 2015), this is because lack of funds leads to non-access to medical facilities and when this happens health status becomes endangered leading to a reduction in life expectancy. Dauda (2017) stated in his research that the level of poverty in Nigeria is different from what is obtainable in other countries as the level increases in Nigeria despite the abundance of resources in the country with the North- West and North – East zones of the country topping the list of poverty prone zones. This situation is not at par with what is observed in developing countries in Europe, America and Asia, where their growth in economy bring about the reduction of the incidence of poverty in their domain. This is in support of the notion that there is no even relationship between poverty, economic growth and development.

Despite the controversial issues facing the conceptualisation of poverty, it is unanimously agreed that poverty has grave consequences on individuals and communities as it gives rise to social exclusion, isolation, fear, distress and deprivations (Backwith, 2015) and reduced care for the poor which might lead to the outbreak of war and terrorism. The poor who becomes powerless and voiceless because of their status dwell in sub-standard environments with the incidence of reduced incomes, inadequate social amenities and opportunities for improved wellbeing. Poverty can give rise to loss of self-confidence, self-actualisation, self-fulfilment, lack of proper orientation and abandonment of cultural values and heritage such that people no longer identify with their culture and race (Shah, 2016). It makes people lack the zeal to function optimally and enjoy the adequate care that was due to them in society. Poverty has a strong link with income, although income as an indicator of poverty has undergone several (Bak & Larsen, 2015).

III. FACTS AND STATISTICS ON POVERTY IN NIGERIA

It is on record that the Federal Republic of Nigeria is the most populous nation in the continent of Africa, with over 190.9 million people (World Bank, 2017). Nigeria had a GDP of \$375.745 billion (USD) with GDP per capita income of \$1,995 (World Bank, 2017). Nigeria is also known as a powerful nation when it comes to exporting goods like petroleum, cocoa and rubber, and this brings a substantial foreign investment and turnover in the agricultural sector as well. Every sector in Nigeria contributes to the growing GDP and with these outstanding performances; it was also observed that the country is listed among the poorest in the world as it is about 100 million Nigerians live on less than \$1.90 a day (World Bank, 2017).

The poor and the less privileged are prevalent in urban slums, and rural communities (FAO, 2018) and the average figure of urban poverty is 60.2% (Nweke, 2012) while that of the rural dwellers is more than 80.4% (Eko, Utting & Udousoro, 2013). The 2019 poverty statistics for national,

urban and rural levels are stated as follows; National: MPI-0.291, H51.4%, A-56.6%, Vulnerable- 16.8%, Severe Poverty-32.3%, Population Share- 100.0%; Urban Areas: MPI-0.112, H-23.4%, A- 47.7%, Vulnerable-19.3%, Severe Poverty-8.9%, Population Share- 3.8% while Rural Areas: MPI-0.383 H-65.7%, A58.2% Vulnerable-15.6%, Severe Poverty-44.2%, Population Share-6.2% (UNDP & OPHI, 2019)

It is essential to note that every leader in Nigeria is aware of the level of poverty in the nation, and they are trying, by all means, to see to it that the situation improves. It is worthy of note that the efforts put in place to combat poverty had not yielded the desired results. Poverty covers many areas that hinder optimum enjoyment in life. It covers areas that bother on lack of necessities of life, insecurity, lack of access to adequate care. United States Statement on poverty (June 1988 cited in Uma, Obidike & Ozoh, 2017) stated that poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities and a violation of the dignity of human. It is the lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means when there is no enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to; not having land to grow one's food or a job to earn a living and not having access to credit facilities. It relates to lack of care, insecurity, powerlessness and deprivation of individuals, households and communities. It is exposure to violence, and it is living in dangerous environments that have no clean water. The above data is the indicator of what is seen and observed in Nigeria. There is also the deprivation of opportunity and choice of work, education, place of settlement and regular deprivation of human right by the leaders and the people. Failure to secure enough resources to cater for self and family members had led to an increase of diverse issues like tricks, robbery, corruption, ritual killing, kidnapping, prostitution amidst other social vices. Hence, the people of the country are now cut up in the web of poverty (Uma, Obidike & Ozoh, 2017).

It is essential to note that statistics of the poor and the less privileged would continue to grow at geometric progression if nothing is being done to check the excesses and when this happens, it points to the fact that there would be an increase in terrorism, deprivation of human rights, reduced access to social amenities which could eventually lead to war. It is therefore imperative to reduce the statistics in order to avert war and nib terrorism in the bud.

IV. CAUSES OF POVERTY

Many things led to poverty and which invariably produce the poor and the less privileged in the society. The causes of poverty if not checked, would lead to an inevitable war in society. The following factors are some of the causes of poverty

➤ **Uneven distribution of Income:** There has been a significant decline in income inequality that dropped from 0.43 to 0.49 between 2004 and 2009. This is linked to uneven access to infrastructural facilities and social amenities. There is also more poor people in rural

areas compared to the poor in the urban area. (Abiodun, 2016).

- **Civil and Ethnic Clashes:** Nigeria has been affected in the past by ethnic or tribal war. They have witnessed the influx and damaging effects of religious militants that are on the increase daily. This civil unrest can be traced to have a link with poverty and economic competition, which in turn have grievous consequences on the human race (Abdulqadri, 2013).
- **Political Instability:** The nature of Nigeria's political atmosphere and a large population with historic ethnic instability gives room for the adoption of a federal system of government. This has led to decentralisation that allows states and local government to have a form of control over 50% of the government's revenues and as well as making provisions for the public. It has been observed that the lack of effective regulation gave room for a high level of corruption and the resources that could have been used for the common good of the masses have been misused (Wikipedia, 2017).
- **Illiteracy:** This is another major cause of poverty in the nation. A more significant percentage of the populace is illiterate and as such, cannot be involved in decisions that affect their wellbeing. They are always at the mercy of the educated elite who takes every decision on their behalf.
- **Neglect of Rural Infrastructure:** The rural population remains one as a result of inadequate infrastructural facilities in their domain. They are continuously served by inadequate infrastructural facilities that are poorly maintained. Some of the social amenities like water, good roads, hospital and schools are lacking in the rural community, and this makes them less privileged and exposed to little or no care. It is for this reason that there are mostly the outbreaks of deadly diseases on the rural population.
- **Incessant increase in the Nigerian Population:** Increase in population is another major factor that causes poverty. In a situation where the resources in the country could no longer serve the population as a result of increased population growth rate, pressure mounts on the available resources. There comes the problem of poor land use, deforestation and the likes which makes some to result in vices like prostitution, crime, armed robbery, terrorism, among others.
- **Bad Governance:** This is the worst of all the factors that cause poverty. Bad governance is a bane of the economy as it leads to the ineffective distribution of resources for the people. It also leads to the formulation of economic policies that are favourable to the elites at the expense of the poor masses.
- **Corruption:** This can be likened to the product of poor or bad governance. It is prevalent to see where the resources meant for the whole population being

concentrated in the hands of a few individuals who divert it for their selfish ambitions and gains. Corruption has affected the economy severely and as well given the country a bad reputation in the global community.

V. POVERTY AND WAR

Poverty and war are generally known to be related because developing countries are exposed to civil war and conflict which becomes a big threat to peace, cooperation, care, economic viability and governance and leads to the collapse of the society (Goodhand, 2001). Studies before now revealed that countries that are prone to macro-level factors are exposed to war and conflict. This is observable in low per capita income and large populations that experience war in comparison to ethnic and religious diversity that do not make countries prone to war (Fearon & Laitin, 2003).

Poverty as a deadly concept also breeds the rise of insurgency that affects the community or the society at large. There is also the high level of unemployment and unequal treatment of citizens in our polity, and this is, in turn, leads to an uproar that causes war and conflict which invariably disturb the peace of the community. It also leads to a lack of access to quality education and most times, people are denied access to education, and this invariably produces citizens that cause an uproar in the society (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2008). There is also the case of horizontal inequalities where some members of ethnic, religious or social groups are denied equal access to public goods, opportunities and resources and this violent generation tensions (Ostby, 2008; Stewart, 2009).

It can be generally observed that war and poverty are closely related because of the adverse effects of poverty on the poor masses and the less privileged that cannot afford the necessities of life. When this happens, they tend to look for alternatives to survive, and these alternatives are not always the best because it eventually leads to civil unrest in the society, thereby disturbing the peace of the society. Being exposed to war as its effects on those involved in it, and this is devastating as it leaves them marginalised from the good things of life (Annan, Blattman, Mazurana & Carlson, 2011).

VI. CARING FOR THE POOR AND THE LESS PRIVILEGED

It is vital to care for the poor and less privileged populace in society. Let it be known that we would always have them in our society, and how we treat them determines a lot about the prosperity of society. If as a society, we want to inhibit war, we must care for the poor and the less privileged. It is very pertinent to commend the efforts of our government in alleviating the sufferings of these set of people, and at the same time, we have to encourage them to do more. There have been programmes set up in the past to cater for them, and some of them are discussed in this paper.

There have been significant poverty alleviation policies and programmes organised to nib in the bud the poverty issues in the nation. It was observed that some of these strategies, despite being the same goal of fighting poverty, were sectional (Oshewolo, 2010). Danaan (2018) cited the following interventions as notable poverty alleviation programmes that have been pursued in Nigeria

- Operation Feed the Nation (Agriculture)
- Free and Compulsory Primary Education (Education)
- Green Revolution (Agriculture)
- Low-Cost Housing (Housing)
- River Basin Development Authorities (Agriculture)
- National Agricultural Land Development Authority (Agriculture)
- Agricultural Development Programmes (Agriculture)
- Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (Agriculture)
- Strategic Grains, Reserves Program (Agriculture)
- Rural Electrification Scheme (Rural Development)
- Rural Banking Programme (Rural development and financial inclusion)
- Family Economic Advancement Programme (Poverty Alleviation)
- Better Life for Rural Women (Women Empowerment)
- Family Support Programme (Poverty Alleviation)
- National Directorate of Employment (Job Creation)
- Mass Transit Programme (Transport)
- Guinea Worm Eradicating Programme (Health)
- Petroleum Trust Fund (Education, Health, Rural Development)
- National Poverty Eradication Programme (Poverty Alleviation)
- National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). It has been observed that with the stated strategies to combat poverty in the nation, there are still wide gaps in terms of adequate management of the welfare of the poor or less privileged citizens in the society. Arisi-Nwugballa, Elom & Onyeizugbe (2016) stated that the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and post-SAP periods in Nigeria were taken seriously by the government, yet it did not achieve the desired objectives.

VII. RECOMMENDATION

In order for war not to arise as a result of the lack of care to the less privileged and poor people in the society, the following recommendations were made:

- The poor children should be made to attend schools that which would make them productive members of the society because they would be exposed to opportunities.
- Efforts should be intensified to care for the rural populace as they are mostly deprived of basic amenities and infrastructural facilities like good roads, schools, hospitals, pipe-borne water, among others.
- The Federal Government of Nigeria should do all within their powers to venture into activities that would improve the economy which would in turn help in the reduction of poverty, invariably increasing the care for the poor and the less privileged. When all these are done, it inhibits war in society.

➤ It is very pertinent to note that the government of the day still has a lot to do in alleviating poverty. We must appreciate their efforts in the social welfare packages like school feeding, n-power, sure-p and the likes. However, it is crucial for the government to effectively monitor the implementation of these programmes if they want to get the best out of the programmes. They need to give responsibilities to capable hands that have proven track records of transparency and accountability.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Fighting poverty in a way to care for the poor and the less privileged have been the major concern of the government, yet no significant results have been recorded because things keep getting worst as a result of corruption, bad governance and political instability among other things that cause poverty. It is very pertinent that the government of the day takes serious, various recommendations that have been presented as the ones in this write-up, to get the best result and inhibit war. The recommendations of this paper are therefore outlined and expected to help reduce poor people and the less privileged in Nigeria if carefully applied with truthfulness, honesty, sincerity and adequate political will. At this point, good leaders with a good heart to savage this situation are needed; leaders who do not practice favouritism but capable of eliminating all forms of corruption.

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