



## Policy discontinuity and poverty in the Nigerian State

**Ignatius Nnamdi Aguene (Ph.D)**

Department of Sociology/ Psychology

Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu

Phone number: 07036596997

Email: agueneignatiusnnamdi@gamil.com

### **Abstract**

*Nigeria has undergone several national development plans starting with 1<sup>st</sup> NDP 1962 – 68, 2<sup>nd</sup> NDP 1970 – 74, 3<sup>rd</sup> NDP 1975 – 80, 4<sup>th</sup> NDP 1981 – 85, SAP 1986 – 1993, Vision 2010 Vision 20-2020, Seven Point Agenda, Transformation Agenda in 2011 Economic Recovery and Growth Plan in 2017 Economic Advisory Council (EAC) 2019. Government is a continuous process there should also be continuity in policies and implementation. Leaders at national, state or local government areas should be nationalistic and selfless in their service to their father land. The problem is that every incoming administration in Nigeria abandon the development plans of their predecessors and embark on their own without first of all completing that of their predecessors. The objective of the study is to find out whether policy discontinuity increases the poverty level in Nigeria. The study found out that discontinuity of policy is a major contributor to increased poverty in Nigeria. We used the Maradun community in Sokoto State of Nigeria as an example of how government policy discontinuity can increase the level poverty among people. Nigeria's leaders tend to prefer top-bottom development strategy that is outdated. The current trends are Bottom-Up Development Strategy, Community driven Development Strategy or Participatory Development Strategy. When it became obvious that they have failed the masses and poverty level was going out of control they went into partnership with some international organizations which gave rise to Fadama Development Projects 1993 – 2015, Millennium Development Goals 2000 – 2015 and Sustainable Development Goals 2015 – 2030 among others to save Nigerians from malnutrition haven grossly mismanaged Nigerian economy. The paper concluded that the dynamics of poverty are reversible but only in collaboration with the poor themselves. Development is sustainable to the extent to which citizens enjoy environmental protection, economic wellbeing and social equity. It was therefore recommended that there should be continuity in both development policies and implementation from one administration to the other until completion of projects and account rendered. This is irrespective of who started the project. There is need for gender equality and adherence to the principles of rule of law to give rise to strong social institutions where nobody will be above the law.*

**Keywords:** development plan, policy, policy discontinuity, poverty, development vision



## **Introduction**

Nigeria has perhaps the largest number of development plans in the world, but we are unable and unwilling to follow through any one of them. Just as we have a legion of abandoned projects, we also possess abandoned development plans (OChereome, 2018).

Nigeria has undergone several national development programmes starting with Nigeria Development Plans from 1962-1990 that is 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> National Development Plans, Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) 1986 –1993, Vision 2010, Vision 20-2020, National Economic Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS), Seven Point Agenda, Transformation Agenda, Economic Recovery, Growth Plan in 2017 and Economic Advisory Council (EAC) in 2019.

Although minimal progress has been made on many fronts, there is still a long way in achieving the objectives of the various Federal, States and Local Government Areas Development Plans. It is unfortunate that despite Nigerian immense natural and human resources, weak social institutions, corruption, non-participatory approach to development and gender inequality have all combined to drag Nigeria behind some developing countries like Malaysia, and Indonesia etc that were worst than Nigeria in the 1960s. Malaysians came to Nigeria in the 1960s to collect palm trees which they planted in their country. Today, Malaysia is one of the highest producers of palm oil in the world.

Then Nigerian economy was based on palm produce, groundnut, cocoa and other agricultural products but in the early 1970s Nigeria shifted to oil economy and abandoned emphasis on agriculture. After squandering the oil money by our leaders they adopted Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) as condition for giving Nigeria loan by the IMF which made Nigerians to suffer terribly and widened the gap between the rich and the poor.

Today in Nigeria our leaders are thinking about zero oil economy which has made Nigerians to go back to agriculture as our only alternative to zero oil economy. It became obvious that the Nigerian leaders lack the capacity to alleviate poverty in Nigeria. They had gone into partnership with the



United Nations Organization, World Bank and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to reduce the poverty level in Nigeria. The programmes included: Fadama Development Projects 1993 - 2015, Millennium Development Goals 2000 - 2015 and Sustainable Development Goals 2015 – 2030. They have helped very much in the fight against poverty in the Nigerian society. Our leaders only succeeded in increasing the poverty level among Nigerians through their various unfulfilled programmes without including the Nigerian masses both in decision making and participation which gave rise to massive corruption. The partnership helped in reducing the poverty level in Nigeria though much could not be achieved because of gender inequality and non observation of the principle of rule of law.

### **Conceptualizing Poverty and its Manifestations in Nigeria**

In the major cities in Nigeria, people live in slums and shanty towns, engage in petty businesses and undertake odd jobs in order to survive. The rate of crime in the urban cities is virtually on the increase (Nnamani, 2009). According to Mudoch (1980) the greatest poverty in our major cities is caused by classless migration of people from the country side to the cities in search of work but majority could not be absorbed into the city's economic life. He believes that urban poverty is worst than village poverty.

Some people in the country side (villages) are richer than those unemployed in the urban cities. In the countryside, the poorest maybe the landless resident migrants and labourers who assemble in village squares for their daily paid labour or for engagement for very low wage. A number of people in the villages engage in subsistence activities such as petty trading, farming, fishing, hunting, wine tapping etc which generate income with which they manage themselves and their families.

The truth is that even the land owner in the village who may have small plots of land and whose farming size is only subsistence-based are comparatively poor (Nnamani 2009).

Poverty leads to stigmatization and social isolation. It is mainly those that have generational poverty that can manage life under poverty. For others, people feel like committing suicide or actually committing suicide. In attempt to escape from poverty, many people have resorted to criminal activities including prostitution. According to Nnamani (2009)

The misery, hopelessness, disease and even death that come with poverty are worse than epidemic. Poverty is characterized by inferiority, inadequacy in most essentials that are indeed for survival. Abject poverty



could lead to mental poverty, physical poverty, psychological and moral poverty.

Poverty is an economic state because people are poor because they lack money and they lack money because they are unable to sell their labour or because they are able to earn only very small income. In other words, the cause of poverty is not the victim but the nature of the economic system and the way it deals with people, Neubeck (1979).

Most of the people living in or near poverty hold full time jobs, for which wages are so low that they cannot count on attaining a secure and adequate standard of living. For those food service workers domestic helps, textile workers, and others who work long hours for small wages, many rural farmers economic success is an unattainable goal that cannot be achieved through hard work.

The answer to poverty lies in creating the conditions for them to earn more from their work. This will mean making the poor more productive. The poverty of nations and the poverty of the people are not as easily separable as was often thought in the past. According to Iheriohmma (2009):

Poverty refers to a state in which the necessary resources are lacking the necessities usually including material but sometimes cultural resources. In absolute term, poverty refers to a state in which the individual lacks the resources that are necessary for subsistence. In relative terms, an individual's or group's lack of necessities or resources in compared with that of other members of the society (Marshall, 1998). In countries that have low income, poverty is very high. This is where African and Third World countries' situation becomes pitiable. It is not only that there is a subjective feeling of poverty but the consequences of poverty expose the relative condition of these countries in an interdependent global economy.

Globalization has widened the gap between the rich and the poor in the third world countries including Nigeria. We entered globalization without necessary adjustment by our leaders thereby increasing our poverty level.

### **Why the worry about Policy Discontinuity in Nigeria**

Poverty and lack of opportunities have forced many Nigerians to migrate to other nations. The security system has nearly collapsed with so many problems at the same time. Kidnapping, armed robbery, political assassination, child trafficking and prostitution etc, Nigeria's score card before



the international community is so poor that in most cases Nigerians are regarded as fraudsters in foreign countries. Ochereome, (2018) noted that:

First, let's look at a few critical metrics which all point in the negative direction, Nigeria ranks 144 out of 180 countries according to Transparency International, TI, 2018 Corruption Perception Index, CPI. In the same year, Nigeria came 88<sup>th</sup> out of 133 countries in the World Justice Project, WJP, Rule of Law Index and achieved the damning status of becoming the "Poverty Capital of the World". According to the World Poverty Clock, created by Vienna based World Data Lab, 91.16 million of the country's 198 million people were living below a dollar a day (extreme poverty) as at February 13, 2019.

However, much has been done but we are not half way into the journey because of obvious reasons like lack of commitment to national and state development policies, continuity of development plans weak social institutions, gender inequality, corruption and non observation of the principles of rule of law. The needs of the Nigerian masses are not known because of Non Participatory Approach to Development or Community Driven Development (CDD) which are the order of the day. For instance, the old Maradun people as we shall see later.

Any government that came to power in Nigeria normally drop the development plan of his predecessors without any accountability because of lack of interest therefore the programme is just abandoned like that without questions giving rise to massive corruption and vandalizing of the remnants of the abandoned development plans. All the Federal Government Administrations, states or even local government council have their own different development plans which have not made any impact on the Nigerian people. Their efforts rarely positively affect Nigeria before they leave office thereby increasing the poverty level in the country..

### **Brief Review of Policy Thrusts in Nigeria over the Years**

According to Oputa (1995) in Nnamani (2009), leadership implies a purposeful direction of the affairs of those being led. It implies movement towards a definite and defined goal which will be for the benefit of the society. To lead therefore, etymologically means to direct by going in front. Leadership in whatever field involves certain qualities such as honesty, humility, commitment to hard work, fairness, visionary patriotism, integrity, ability to conceive programmes of permanent value and fairness (Obasanjo and Mbaogunbe, 1991). Unfortunately, these qualities are lacking in



the Nigerian society and could account for why poverty level in the country has continued to increase instead of decreasing.

**Nigeria's Development Plan from 1962 – 1990:** According to Egwuato and Kolawole (2019) the 1<sup>st</sup> NDP (1962 – 68) then the nation was divided into regions and agriculture was given the highest priority. Political tensions did not allow the plan to progress. 2<sup>nd</sup> NDP 1970 – 74 it was launched immediately after the Nigerian Biafran civil war. This was to rebuild the war damaged economy, the highest priority was agriculture. The 3<sup>rd</sup> NDP 1975 – 80. The plan placed high priority on the development of basic industries, infrastructure and social participatory education and health. The 4<sup>th</sup> NDP 1981 – 85. It was formulated by democratically elected government the aim was to increase the participation of citizen in the ownership of enterprises etc. The performance of the economy during the 4<sup>th</sup> NDP was poor because of the decline in oil prize in 1983 which led to review of the NDP in 1984 though much was not achieved.

**Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) 1986 – 1993:** Before SAP the economy was attached to oil but with decline in oil prize this led to stagnation of the economy. In 1986 the President Ibrahim Babangida launched Structural Adjustment Programme the main aim was to restructure and classify the economy's production base in order to reduce the country's dependency on imports and oil sector. However, SAP helped to develop agriculture.

**Abacha's Vision 2010:** The broad vision statement was that by 2010, Nigeria would have been transformed into "a united, industrious, caring and God-fearing democratic society, committed to making the basic needs of life affordable for everyone and creating Africa's leading economy."

According to Ujah and Anthony (2019) execution of vision 2010 ran into hitches with sudden death of General Abachain 1998. The vision 2010 was not achieved because refineries were out of shape with Nigeria importing fuel from other countries. By 1996 50 percent of Nigerians were categorized as poor people. It was assumed that Nigeria will be corrupt free in 2010 which was not realized.



**Obasanjo's Vision 2020:** The vision 20-2020 is a dream statement that Nigeria will become one of the first 20 economies in the world by the year 2020 the objectives according to Ujah (2010):

Fundamental to the vision are two broad objectives: to make efficient use of human and natural resources to achieve rapid economic growth; and to translate the economic growth into equitable social development for all citizens. These aspirations are defined across four areas, which are social, economy, institutional and political dimensions.

Here we are in 2020 much is left to be desired as regards the actualization of the vision. Nigeria was the 29<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world in 2019. According to Ujah (2019):

In spite of Nigeria's immense natural and human resources, weak management and corruption have combined to drag her behind some developing countries like Malaysia, Indonesia and Venezuela that was worse than Nigeria in development in the 1960s.

**Jonathan's Transformation Agenda** In 2011 President Goodluck Jonathan launched the Transformation Agenda as a follow up to the Seven Points Agenda of his predecessor late President Umaru Yaradua though he actually departed from it. The Transformation "Agenda was aimed at stopping leakages, increasing the revenue generated from non oil sectors of Nigeria. This led to the launching of subsidy reinvestment and empowerment programme SURE-P to monitor savings and income from petroleum imports".

Though much of the progress was expected in the second tenure of the Jonathan's administration, however the administration was defeated in the 2015 general elections. Therefore, the transformation agenda was based on hope which never materialized. The transformation agenda did not allow the Seven Points Agenda of late President Umaru Yaradua to materialize because it was abandoned when Yaradua died.

### **President Muhammadu Buhari's Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP)**

President Muhammadu Buhari's government introduced the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) in 2017 as a policy option. It is a medium term all round development initiative focused on restoring growth, investing in people and building a globally competitive economy. The focus is to stabilize the macro environment achieve agriculture and food security, ensure energy sufficiency in power and petroleum products security improve transformation,



infrastructure and drive industrialization (Egwuatu and Kolawole, 2019). It is expected to cover four year until 2020. The programme is a failure because the inauguration of a new team the Economic Advisory Council (EAC) by the same Buhari administration is an indication that ERGP is total failure. Though, the Buhari administration is currently giving palliatives and incentives to vulnerable Nigerians to cushion of the effects of the corona virus decease pandemic ravaging the world and to prepare vulnerable Nigerians on life after Corona Virus Pandemic.

### **How Policy Discontinuity Have Affected Poverty Situation in Nigeria**

The failure of the poor to benefit from agricultural sector investment has not reflected an economic failure among the poor themselves. Rather, it has involved policy and institutional failures according to Idriss (1992) quoted in Aguene (1998):

Land reforms involve loopholes accounting for the fact that regularization programmes have sometimes unintentionally became avenues for legalizing the eviction of the poor and the actual loss of their traditional rights. Large scale irrigation schemes expose existing small farmers occupying the area to expulsion. When allocating land over the irrigated areas, poor farmers are not often given a chance. Water conservation which would have been beneficial to the poor are not taken seriously by the authorities.

The central argument of this work according to Mado(1986) on account of his field work on old Maraduna community in Sokoto State of Nigeria in 1985 before their expulsion he also visited new Maradunin 1986:

Indigenes of old Maradun had the food viable agricultural system which enabled them to produce surplus. The most price of old Maradun farms were in the flood plains (Fadama )of River Sokotoand other streams. The agriculture was destroyed to give way to Bakolori Dan and irrigation agriculture which to all intent and purpose has not been successful as the one destroyed. The option left is for the farmers to migrate or change occupation. The authorities believed that the Maradun farmers were primitive that irrigation agriculture needed people who are educated. The level of production was so poor compared to what old Maradun was



producing. It was the poor performance which could not even go half what the old Maradun was producing that made then former Head of State General Ibrahim Babangida to restrict River Basin Development Authorities to only water supply. Agricultural development was taken away from them.

The Maradun as a community was so disorganized that cracks started opening in the family structure. Some people even lost their lives while sharing the money paid to them as compensation for their economic trees and buildings. Some farmers became farm labourers in other communities while some tried their hands on business and other things. The people became poorer than they were before the construction of dam and irrigation.

The people of old Maradun is only an example, there are many communities in an Nigeria that had suffered the same fate. This is because our leaders use top - down development strategy which is outdated. If they had used bottom – up development approach or participatory approach to development, they would have known that there was no need to expel them because feasibility study would have shown that they had enough water for agriculture.

Then federal government of President Ibrahim Babangida removed agricultural development from River Basin development authority after the expulsion of old Maradun people in 1985 did not help the old Maradun people. The Federal Government through Bakolori Dan and Irrigation Agriculture Authority frustrated them and the harm cannot be reversed.

The demands of globalization that all economies be competitive, market-driven, information-and knowledge-driven, liberalized and with sufficient institutional framework for its support imply the need for a restructuring of all the traditional economic infrastructure and institutions.

On the contrary, African nations lack the necessary structures to participate. Yet they have to be whipped into line. For example, they lacked the efficiency and sound policies. They need to develop adequate human and institutional capacity, physical infrastructure as well as implement policies necessary to seize the opportunities and meet the challenges of globalization. These inadequacies expose the failure of African states in their roles and responsibilities to their citizens. There is lack of responsive leadership to take the bull by the horns rather than compromise on foreign policies that appear to deepen the African poverty



trap. Their effort should be able to disabuse the notion that poverty is endemic in Africa (Todaro and Smith, 2003; Alimi, Ayanwale, Bamile and Bello, 2004)” (Iheriohna, 2009).

### **Partnerships with International Organizations for Poverty Reduction in Nigeria and their Prospects and Challenges**

According to Idriss (1992) poverty is not only a personal phenomenon. It is a social status. As such, while its effects can be measured on the level of the individual, its causes must be sought elsewhere. In a world of competition for scarce resources investments in rural development tend to be captured by those with national and local power- a group which rarely encompasses the rural poor. While the poor can overcome poverty, they will not be able to until this becomes a major focus of national policy and action. Hence, the need for partnership to break the shackles of poverty among Nigeria, They fought poverty through the focal persons in different states of the federation.

**Fadama Development Projects** Fadama I lasted from 1993 – 1999 following the widespread adoption of simple and low-cost improved irrigation technologies, farmers realized incomes increased from various crops up to 65%. In 2001 FG adopted a new rural development strategy that resulted in Fadama II as a follow up to Fadama I. Fadama II stressed the principle of non-intervention, consistency, sustainability and greater equity in access to land benefit of resources. Fadama III succeeded Fadama II. The objective of Fadama III was to increase the income of farmers, reduce rural poverty, increase food security and contribute to rural development goals. Fadama III, additional finance which started in 2015 for agricultural transformation agenda. It focused on import to value chains of cassava, rice, sorghum and horticulture.

To participate, farmer use expected to join cluster group through Fadama offices in participatory states. Access to loan and agricultural information were additional benefit of participation in Fadama projects. While low awareness and inadequate funding were constraints (Ezike 2012, Akinbamowe and Alknda 2014).

Both experience and profit from Fadama projects have helped the community members to participate in rural development of their communities’ women inclusive. Those who participated



in Fadama development projects became better off food security wise it greatly reduced the level of malnutrition among participants.

**Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** United Nations Millennium summit in New York in September 2000 agreed 8 measurable goals and targets for combating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. The eight goals centre on the core objective of halving between 1990 and 2015 the number of people who live on less than 1\$ a day. A key to achieving this goal is building sustained economic growth that in turn spurs a sustained rise in the average per capital income (Onuigbo, 2015).

Increased farm outputs using sustainable practices transportation, gender equality which includes empowering women, reduce violence, increasing political voice. The Millennium Development goals enabled women realize their true worth and were in a better position to contribute to development through their various associations.

**Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** The sustainable development goals cover social and economic development issues including poverty, hunger, health, education, climate change, gender equality, water, sanitation, energy, urbanization, environment and social justice. The goals were developed to succeed the Millennium Development Goals that ended in 2015. The Sustainable Development Goals will end in 2030.

Achieving the SDGs requires the partnership of government, private sector, civil society and citizens alike to make sure we leave a better planet for future generations. Nigeria emphasizes are on poverty, hunger and gender equality. Empowerment women became the focus because economic empowerment will lead to social, political and religious empowerment. Poverty and hunger were attacked through the focal persons in each state of the federation.

### **Conclusion**

Poverty is less a failure of poor, than a failure of policy makers to grasp their potential: According to Idriss (1992), as individuals, many of the poor are virtually unreachable. As member of associations and groups they create their own channels for institutional access. The dynamics of



poverty are reversible, but only in collaboration with the poor themselves. The most valid spokesmen of the poor are the poor themselves.

Sustainable development is contingent upon the three pillars of: environmental protection economic well-being and social equity. In other words, we say development is being sustained to the extent to which citizens enjoy environmental protection, economic well-being and social equity. That is, we measure sustainable development with the above mentioned factors. In order to achieve the above in an economy, it requires the full and equal participation of women at all levels. This is because, it is clearly inappropriate to try and address problems, to identify the appropriate strategies or to implement the solution if only half of the people concerned are involved in the process. Hence, gender equity is an essential building block in sustainable development.

### **Recommendations**

We need change of attitude towards poverty because poverty can be attacked through collective action. It is nothing but deprivation which can only be alleviated through restructuring the entire social, economic and political set ups of the nation. Leaders should be selfless and nationalistic in their development policies and implementation. There should be continuity in both development policies and implementation from one administration to another until completion of projects.

Government is a continuous process there should also be continuity in policies and implementation of policies. The principles of rule of law should be observed to give rise to strong social institutions resulting in transparency and accountability. Any incoming administration should ideally complete whatever projects his predecessor started before leaving office. On assuming office the new executive should be able to ascertain the level of completion and how much money has been spent. This is to find out the level of transparency and accountability from the managers of the project or projects. Through this we can also reduce poverty to a minimum level the states and local government areas inclusive.



### References

- Aguene, I.N. (1998). *Rural Sociology: A African perspective*. Nsukka Prize Publishers.
- Aguene, I.N. (1999). *Contemporary Social Problems*. Nsukka Prize Publishers.
- Egwuatu, P. & Kolawole, Y. (2019). Vanguard Monday September 30, 2019.
- Iheriohanma, E.B.J. (2009). *Globalization, Leadership Challenges and Poverty in African: A Sociological Review*. Paper presented at a National Conference on Africa and the Poverty Traps, organized by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, NnamdiAzikwe University, Akwa, 22 – 24 April, 2009.
- Nnamani, L.C. (2009). *Politics of Development and Underdevelopment*. Enugu: John Jacob's Classic Publishers Ltd.
- Ochereome N. (2019). Vanguard Monday September 30, 2019.
- Ujah, E. (2019). Vanguard Monday September 30,, 2019.
- Ujah, E. and Anthony, M. (2019). Vanguard Monday September 30 2019.