

Democracy and Development in Nigeria, Volume 2: Economic and Environmental Issues

This book, through careful handling of issues on economics and the environment, has brought out clearly the relationship that exists between these issues and development. While noting the giant strides which the Nigerian State is making in addressing economic and environmental matters, the book shows the paths that policy-makers could follow in addressing unresolved issues to make democracy the facilitator of the development in Nigeria.

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Democracy and Development in Nigeria, Vol. 2, Economic & Environmental Issues



Chapter 5

Reflections on Poverty-Reduction Strategies

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Introduction

EVIDENCE abounds to show that poverty in Nigeria is severe, chronic, and on the increase. It is paradoxical that a country recognized as one of the richest in human and material resources in Africa and indeed in the whole world finds itself in this rather inglorious position. Since the early 1970s, Nigeria has ranked as the sixth world's largest producer of crude petroleum. The country has earned billions of dollars from the export of the commodity particularly in the 1970s, during the early 1980s, the Gulf War periods of 1991 and 2003, and the recent hike in petroleum prices worldwide from which Nigeria earned as much as fifty billion naira from the sale of oil as at the end of year 2004 (Nzewi 2000, Edoh 2003, *The Punch* 2004, *Financial Times* 2004 and 2005). Nigerians and their well-wishers had hoped that with such enormous resources, it would be possible for the country to "take off" and achieve rapid "socio-economic" and industrial transformation. But as Edoh (2003:3) notes, through a combination of mismanagement, poor leadership and an incredible level of corruption on the part of public officials, Nigeria's fortunes were either squandered or siphoned off.

Thus, at the beginning of the 1980s, hard times had set in and the country was footloose in the international money markets looking for loans and other credit facilities. As it is to be expected, the spiralling poverty and the plummeting standards of living that were some of the resultant effects of this development had negative implications on all sectors of the Nigerian society. The political, social as well as economic life of Nigerians began to experience serious strains and stresses as the country sunk deeper into the quagmire of economic crises and poverty. In the last few decades, poverty has become pervasive and endemic in Nigeria. During the same period, the country has slipped from being one of the most buoyant and upcoming economies to rank among the poorest countries in the world. Hence, the rationale for public-sector poverty-reduction/alleviation strategies (Diakwa and Amaly 1988, Ayua 2001, Ukpong 1999).

Conceptualizing Poverty

There has been a great deal of literature on the concept of poverty. Anyanwu (1997), Oladunmi (1999), Todaro (1977), Ijaiya (2000), Killick (1981), Onokerhoraye (2001), World Bank (1990 and 1996) and Kankwenda (2000), among others, have provided various definitions of poverty from which two major perceptions of absolute and relative poverty emerged. Killick (1981) posits that absolute poverty is that minimum of income necessary for survival and physical efficiency. According to him, the poor are those living below a specified minimum level of subsistence income necessary to secure the basic essentials of food, clothing and shelter. Thus, a "poverty line" of, say, a given amount of income per annum is usually specified. The World Development Report (1990) used 320 US dollars per annum as poverty line. Those who fall below such income level were regarded as poor.

This concept of absolute poverty has its drawbacks. First, it excludes the non-quantitative aspects of poverty such as life

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expectancy, literacy, health care and the like, which play very significant roles in determining the extent of poverty. Secondly, it raises the problem of defining a "minimum" that is generally acceptable within a country and internationally. However, in spite of the notable shortcomings of the absolute perception of poverty, it has some merits. First, it enables poverty to be measured quantitatively with its implications for policy-making and evaluation. Second, some form of mathematical and statistical techniques can be used to handle poverty and poverty-related matters (Nzewi, 2000).

The second conceptualization of poverty is the relative concept. In relative terms, poverty is seen as a deprivation relative to the societal norm. This implies that poverty is regarded as people's ability to furnish themselves with a "socially acceptable minimum standard of living." The problem with this concept is that poverty is virtually found in practically all societies, both developed and developing. Secondly, poverty will always be with us as no human society has ever achieved poverty eradication, especially in a market-driven economy such as the one we operate in Nigeria (see Killick, 1981:37, Ajakaiye and Adeyeye, 2001:5).

It is not surprising therefore, that the absolute concept of poverty is being used predominantly, although with some explicit incorporation of certain hitherto excluded social indicators like life expectancy, literacy, health care, housing, as well as income. The World Bank's Human Development Index (HDI) is a good example of a measure of poverty incorporating both income and non-income indicators. Thus, it has been argued by various scholars that a more realistic perception of poverty emerges when what is now generally referred to as the Human Development Index (HDI) is applied. The HDI is a form of yardstick that measures or assesses a population's access to facilities or services like education, health, transportation, balanced nutrition, etc., in

addition to income (see Obasanjo & Mabogunje, 1992, Kankwenda, 2000:4 and Alimeka 2001).

Meanwhile, Onokerhoraye (2001) has pointed out that a conceptualization of poverty in terms of HDI faces some obvious problems. Forsyth and Leach, in particular, have argued that in applying the bundle of indices aggregated under the HDI, the components and weighting of such statistical bundles are not only difficult but become arbitrary. They further argue that, aggregate statistics may hide small-scale variations that could have significant implications for certain social groups. Aggregating, Onokerhoraye (cited in Edoh 2003:6) notes, may therefore not provide policy-makers with sufficient guidance for specific local problems.

Taking a cue from the above discussion so far, one gets an understanding of poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon that is both a state and a process. Thus, Kankwenda (cited in Alimeka 2001:4) posits:

Poverty is a state of deprivation or denial of the basic choices and opportunities needed to enjoy a decent standard of living; to live a long, healthy constructive life and to participate in the cultural life of the community.

According to Edoh (2003:6), the above bears a striking semblance with the characterizations of the phenomenon of poverty by the Copenhagen Declaration of 1995. Thus, in Alimeka's words, as quoted by Edoh (ibid), the Declaration asserts that:

Poverty has various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health, limited or lack of access to education and other basic services, increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments, social

discriminations and exclusion. It is also characterized by a lack of participation in decision making and in civil, social and cultural life (Alimeka 2001:3)

From the preceding discussion, it is obvious that poverty must be conceptualized in both its manifestive and consequential characteristics.

The Nature and Extent of Poverty in Nigeria

Research studies have exposed the dimensions and extent of poverty in Nigeria. The studies revealed that the quality of life of the average Nigerian citizen has over the years nose-dived progressively. The findings painted a grim picture of a nation trapped in a vortex of abysmal poverty and declining productivity (see Ogunmike 1991; Ike 1992; Obasanjo and Mabogunje, 1992; Obadan 1997; Sagbama 1997; Obadan and Odusola 2001, Uniamikigbo, 1997 and Alimeka, 2001).

Similarly, a joint research by the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS), National Planning Commission and the World Bank (1999) confirms that poverty is widespread and severe in Nigeria. Using the recent World Bank Economic and Social Database as a measure of poverty indicators, Nigeria ranked below Kenya, Ghana and Zambia (Table 1 on page 91).

Evidently, the incidence of poverty in Nigeria has been high and on the general increase since 1980. Table 2 on page 92 buttresses this point.

Table 1: Social Indicators: Nigeria and Selected Countries (Per cent, unless otherwise stated)

	Nigeria	Cote d'Ivoire	Ghana	Kenya	Zambia	Indonesia	China
GNP per capita, 1995 (US \$)	260	660	390	280	400	980	620
Population growth	2.9	3.6	3.0	2.8	3.1	1.5	1.1
Life expectancy, 1993	52	56	58	59	47	63	69
Infant mortality, 1994	114	90	74	59	108	53	30
Birth rate	43.3	45.1	41.1	37.4	47.3	25.0	19.0
Death rate	14.2	11.7	11.7	9.8	16.7	2.9	2.0
Total fertility rate	6.0	6.5	5.3	4.9	6.0	2.9	2.0
Dependency ratio	106.0	90.0	98.7	108.6	102.9	67.7	48.8
Access to safe water, 1993	40	83	56	49	59	42	71
Urban	52	100	93	61	76	65	84
Rural	20	75	39	21	43	32	61
Gross primary school enrolment, 1993	84	69	74	97	104	115	121
Female	81	58	67	93	99	113	116
Pupil/teacher ratio—							
Primary	39	37	29	31	44	23	22
Secondary	20	43	17	17	28	16	15
Illiteracy rate, 1995—							
Female	61	62	49	42	35	36	36
Population between relative poverty line, 1992-96	34	40	32	41	68	17	11

Source: Computed by Nzewi (2000:6) and Edoh (2003:12)

Table 2: Nigeria: Trend in Poverty Level 1980 - 96 (in %)

Year	Poverty Level (%)	Estimated Total Population (millions)	Population in Poverty (millions)
1980	28.1	65	17.7
1985	46.3	75	34.7
1992	42.7	91.5	39.3
1996	65.6	102.3	67.1

Source: Federal Office of Statistics, National Census Survey, 1996. Adopted from Nzewi (2000:7).

A brief analysis of Table 2 shows that the poverty level in Nigeria rose from 28.1% in 1980 to 46.35 in 1985. A slight drop to 42.7% was recorded in 1992 but the poverty level jumped dramatically to 65.6% in 1996. Furthermore, using the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI), Nigeria ranked as the 142nd with an HDI of 0.400 among 174 countries listed in 1997. But by 1998, the country dropped to 146th position thereby falling among the 40 poorest countries in the world (see Jhingian, 2001; Nzewi, 2000: 7 and Ojo et al., 1997).

As Edoh (2003:11) rightly observes, the severity of poverty in Nigeria is equally glaring when other indicators of services and development are considered. According to him, a tabulation of the life expectancy of Nigerians, population per doctor, population per hospital bed and the rate of infant mortality, demonstrates the pathetic conditions in which citizens find themselves in the country. Using a table adopted from Obadan and Odusola (2001) to support his claim, Edoh points out that from 1980 to 1998, life expectancy had only marginally improved from 47.7 to 53.0 years while the general average is 52 years. For the same period, the number of citizens per hospital bed rose from 1,510 to 1,738. Improvements were recorded in the area of population per doctor and in the rate of infant mortality. Similarly, studies and reports by Uniamikiebo (1997), Sagbama (1997), World Bank (1996),

UNDP (1997), Ogwumike (1991) and Vision 2010 demonstrate how low Nigerians rank in terms of access to electricity, safe drinking water, adequate housing, sufficient caloric intake, etc. A look at the following Table 3 shows the situation as regards life expectancy and access to health care in Nigeria between 1980 and 1998.

Table 3: Life Expectancy/Access to Health Care in Nigeria 1980 - 1998

Year	Life Expectancy (years)	Population per Doctor	Population per Hospital Bed	Infant Mortality per 1,000 Births
1980	47.7	12,550	1,510	135
1981	48.1	8,356	1,433	144
1982	50.0	9,400	1,351	109
1983	48.0	7,640	NA	112
1984	49.3	6,410	1,089	110
1985	49.7	6,484	1,073	109
1986	51.0	6,134	1,083	NA
1987	50.5	4,987	1,400	105
1988	51.0	4,857	800	103
1989	51.0	4,500	1,040	100
1990	52.0	4,300	1,140	98
1991	52.0	4,023	1,000	87
1992	52.0	3,867	1,130	96
1993	52.0	3,717	1,277	114
1994	52.0	3,701	1,340	NA
1995	52.0	3,707	1,477	NA
1996	52.0	4,806	1,655	114
1997	53.0	4,839	1,632	114
1998	53.0	4,977	1,738	114

Source: Adopted from Edoh (2003:12)

Similarly, a recent study carried out by Ijaiya (2004) confirms that the incidence of poverty in Nigeria is on the increase.

According to him, the incidence of poverty which was 28.1% in 1980, rose to 88.0% in the year 2002. As demonstrated in Table 4, the percentage increase represents, in absolute terms, 86.0 million people out of an estimated population of about 116.4 million people.

Table 4: Estimated Total Population and Rate of Poverty in Nigeria (1980-2002)

Year	Estimated Total Population (in millions)	Absolute No of Poor People (in millions)	Percentage % that are Poor
1980	64.6	18.1	28.1
1981	66.7	21.3	32.0
1982	68.4	24.2	35.5
1983	70.6	27.5	39.0
1984	73.0	31.4	43.0
1985	75.4	34.9	46.3
1986	77.9	35.8	46.0
1987	80.4	36.5	45.4
1988	83.1	37.4	45.0
1989	84.9	37.7	44.5
1990	86.6	38.0	44.0
1991	88.5	38.3	43.5
1992	91.3	39.0	42.7
1993	93.5	45.8	49.0
1994	96.2	52.6	54.1
1995	98.9	59.3	60.0
1996	102.3	67.3	65.6
1997	104.0	67.6	65.5
1998	106.3	68.0	69.5
1999	109.3	72.3	72.0
2000	111.3	77.0	74.0
2001	114.0	81.2	83.1
2002	116.4	86.0	88.0

Sources: (a) National Population Commission (1993); (b) Central Bank of Nigeria Annual Report; (c) Federal Office of Statistics (1999)

Poverty Profile for Nigeria (1980-1996). – Computed by Ijaiya (2004).

The above analysis shows clearly that whatever indices are used to measure the phenomenon, poverty is real in Nigeria and Nigerians are indeed very poor.

However, the fundamental question that should agitate the minds of any and every sane Nigerian is: Why should any Nigerian be poor let alone live below the poverty line in spite of our abundant human and material endowment?

Causes and Effects of Poverty

Research studies have shown that the causes of poverty in Nigeria are varied and dynamic. However, while economists tend to look at the causes of poverty from a purely economic point of view, namely: low productivity, inflation, declining income, etc., scholars from a wide spectrum of social sciences argue that to concentrate on or emphasize economic variables alone is to miss the dynamics of the problem. They submit that the economic variables must be taken together with a host of other social, political and cultural factors. Against this background therefore, a compendium of socio-cultural, economic and political factors responsible for poverty in Nigeria include: increased unemployment and underemployment, destruction of natural resources and endowments, corruption and embezzlement, poor leadership, poor maintenance culture, low productivity and market imperfections. Others are: lack of basic infrastructure, rapid population growth, physical or environmental degradation, excessive external indebtedness and inadequate commitment to programme implementation, among others (see Eyoobunwan, 1997; Ijaiya, 2000; Narayan, 2000; Ward, 1997; Obadan, 1997; United Nations, 1995; World Bank, 1990, 1996; Ajakaiye and Adeyeye, 2001; and Edoh, 2003).

Reflecting on the effects or consequences of poverty, Von Hauff and Kruse (in Ijaiya, 2004:32) identify three major consequences of poverty, namely:

- (i) For those affected, poverty leads to physical and psychological misery, caused, *inter alia*, by inadequate nourishment, lack of medical care, lack of basic education, unemployment and discrimination in the labour market;
- (ii) Consequences for the national economies of countries affected: These arise from the formation of slums in cities, a worsening of ecological problems, particularly through predatory exploitation of land for agriculture, and underutilization of available human resources; and
- (iii) Consequences for the political and social development of the countries affected: Mass poverty tends to preserve or reinforce the existing power structures and privileges of a minority of the population. This, in some cases, may involve a corrupt elite. These privileged minorities are generally not interested in making structural changes to benefit the poor population. Consequently, mass poverty tends to inhibit the development of democratic structure and a higher level of participation in economic and social development (*The Punch*, June 28, 2005).

Aku and Bulus (1997) cited by Ijaia (2004:53) corroborate the above assertion when they declared: "with mass poverty, there tends to be a general loss of confidence in the constituted authority, thereby generating disrespect and rendering government policies ineffective; there tends to be political apathy among contending forces; and there tends to be social disillusion with respect to what the societal objectives are and peoples' responsibilities towards the attainment of those objectives."

A Critique of Nigeria's Poverty-Reduction Strategies

Although poverty alleviation has not always been indicated as the main focus of the country's development planning and management

policies, government has on several occasions taken calculated steps to address the problem. For instance, while the first three national development plans concentrated mainly on economic growth (and indirectly dealt with poverty alleviation issues), the fourth contained policies aimed at poverty reduction. This, among other objectives, emphasized on the increase in the real income of the average citizen, and more even distribution of income among individuals and socio-economic groups (Ulpong, 1999).

In addition, during the oil boom era of 1973-80, education and health services were significantly expanded by government to enable Nigerians acquire skills for increased income earnings to improve their welfare. The economic crisis of the early 1980s, which adversely affected the social sector, has been on the decline since then. In order to curb the decline in social service delivery, especially to the poor, governments at various levels have launched various programmes and established various organs ostensibly targeting poverty reduction. Among these were Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), Better Life Programme (BLP), Green Revolution (GR), Family Support Programme (FSP), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Petroleum (special) Trust Fund (PTF), People's Bank and Community Banks, and the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP). Relatively new measures introduced since 1999 by the government include the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) which was later replaced with the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), all in the name of reducing poverty in Nigeria (see Ajakaiye and Adeyeye 2001, *New Nigerian*, April 25, 2002:4 *New Nigerian*, August 26, 2001:7; *Nigerian Tribune*, March 26, 2002:27-28).

However, like any other well-intended government policy and programme in Nigeria, the various poverty-alleviation strategies have consistently failed to reduce or alleviate poverty due to

identified bottlenecks that constrained effective implementation. For instance, the voice of the poor who constitute the focus of poverty-reduction programmes has not been heard nor have their input formed a significant part of the process and content of the programmes. Of course, the problem of lack of baseline data and hence poor conceptualizations of most of these programmes has also militated against poverty-alleviation strategies. So also is ineffective targeting of the rural poor by most of the programmes and the fact that many of them do not focus directly on the poor.

Poor targeting led to high linkage level of the programmes' benefits to unintended beneficiaries (Ajakaiye and Adeyeye, 2001:9; *The News*, November 25, 2002). Similarly, Alimeka (in Edoh 2003:13) argues that poverty-reduction programmes in the country have only benefited those who design and implement them while the poor are left "drier..." The fact is that, the various programmes such as "Better Life for Rural Women", Family Support Programme, etc., primarily bettered, supported and advanced the monetary and property acquisition urge and interests of the wives of heads of state, governors and local government chairmen who embezzled the vast resources appropriated for poverty reduction in Nigeria in the past three decades.

Using a modified version of Killicks' (1981) seven-point criteria for evaluating public policies, Nzewi (2000:12) subjected Nigeria's poverty-alleviation programmes to a somewhat rigorous scrutiny and arrived at the following conclusions:

- ♦ That the programmes have failed to address the cause or causes of poverty;
- ♦ That the programmes were not designed to incorporate the principle of accountability, transparency and honesty;
- ♦ That the programmes are not consistent and sustainable over time with regard to finance, interest as well as institutional arrangements;

- ♦ That the programmes do not incorporate implementation measures in their design;
- ♦ That the programmes do not incorporate adequate targeting mechanisms so as to correctly identify and target the real poor; and
- ♦ That the programmes are neither indigenous nor designed to naturally enlist the support and participation of the intended beneficiaries.

Given the flaws identified above, we can conclude that Nigeria's poverty-alleviation strategies are a child's play. This is because, not only have the strategies failed to address the underlying causes of poverty in Nigeria, they have in fact compounded and worsened the poverty situation, hence the World Bank's assertion that poverty is widespread and increasing in Nigeria (see World Bank Report, 1996).

The obvious reason for the above tragedy is that the various poverty-alleviation strategies have functioned as a conduit for siphoning off public resources or as a smokescreen under which massive looting of these resources were carried out. Hence, it is not an overstatement to assert that most poverty-alleviation programmes in Nigeria have been consciously created or designed to siphon off public funds and enrich public officials and their collaborators.

The Need for Democratic Space in Poverty Reduction

Politics, not just economics, determines what we do – or do not do – to address human poverty. And what is lacking are not the resources or the economic solutions but the political momentum and democratic environment to tackle poverty head-on.

Much is known about what is needed to eradicate poverty, such as: job-led growth, access to credit, redistribution of land, investment in basic social services, promotion of the informal sector and sound macroeconomic policies. But too little attention has gone

to finding ways to ensure that such actions are taken. How can democracy create an environment that ensures that state policies, market forces, civil activism and community mobilization contribute positively to poverty eradication? What political reform is needed to ensure pro-poor policies and pro-poor markets? As the *Human Development Report* (1997:94-98) rightly noted, a democratic strategy for poverty eradication has the following elements:

Political Empowerment of Poor People

People must organize for collective action to influence the circumstances and decisions affecting their lives. To advance their interests, their voices must be heard in the corridors of power.

Partnership for Change

All agents in society – trade unions, the media, community groups, private companies, political parties, academic institutions, professional associations – need to come together in partnership to address human poverty in all its dimensions. And that partnership must be based on common interests and brokered compromises. Democracy ensures the creation of a free society, open enough to tolerate a complex web of interests and coalitions and to ensure stability and progress towards poverty reduction and human development.

An Enabling and Responsible State

In consonance with the ideals of the current democratic dispensation, the Nigerian State needs to foster a peaceful expression of people's priorities and to ensure a democratic space for brokering the interests of many groups in the society. Thus, it needs to promote participation and encourage private-public partnerships. It also needs to be transparent and accountable and to resist pressure from the economically powerful.

The Need for Collective Action

Achievements in poverty reduction depend, first and foremost, on people's ability to articulate their demands and mobilize for collective action. Isolated and dispersed, poor people have no power and no influence over political decisions that affect their lives. But organized, they have the power to ensure that their interests are advanced. As a group, they can influence state policies and push for the allocation of adequate resources to human development priorities, for markets that are more people-friendly and for economic growth that is pro-poor. It is the pressure from people to defend their rights and to remove obstacles and enhance their life opportunities that will eradicate human poverty (see Kwakwa, 2002:7, Jega, 2003).

Conclusion

In this paper, we have demonstrated with the aid of data, the extent and causes of poverty in Nigeria. We have also highlighted the various poverty-alleviation strategies and adduced reasons for their failure. Our conclusion is that the various poverty-reduction strategies in Nigeria have failed to address the underlying causes of poverty and have therefore failed to alleviate poverty due largely to corruption, lack of accountability and transparency and, above all, insensitivity to the plight of the poor masses.

On the strength of the above findings, the paper explored the possibility of relying on our nascent democracy in the Fourth Republic to redress issues of past failures in poverty reduction. The paper realizes, however, that building a peaceful political and democratic momentum for poverty eradication is a formidable challenge. Poverty often serves the vested interests of the economically powerful, which may benefit from exploiting the pool of low-paid labour.

The realities of economic, social and political disparities and

injustices are so overwhelming that only a few believe that the status quo can change. The voiceless poor have become cynical under authoritarian regimes. And some think that only violence and confrontation can produce real change in favour of the poor. Poverty is brutal. It can provoke violent reactions. Those who profit from the status quo have often defended their position with violence. And when disappointment and frustration have risen to a crisis point, the poor have sometimes turned to armed struggle. Progress in poverty eradication has often been won through uprisings and rebellions against states that have advanced the interests of the economically powerful while tolerating rigid class divisions, unbearable economic conditions and human suffering and poverty.

History is marked by uprisings and rebellions sparked by poverty. English peasants revolted against an impoverishing poll tax in 1381. German peasants rose up against their feudal overlords in opposition to serfdom in 1524. Full-scale revolutions have their roots in people's reactions to poverty and economic injustice. Spontaneous uprisings instigated the French Revolution in 1789, the revolutionary movements throughout Europe in 1848 and the Russian Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 (Human Development Report, 1997:95).

Sometimes it was the violence itself that sabotaged the achievements of these struggles. Many revolutions replaced one evil with another through harsh recriminations, self-serving leadership, misguided utopianism or betrayals. We wish to observe, however, that not all progress in poverty eradication was achieved through confrontation. Some strides in poverty reduction through democratic institutions, especially since 1960, have been gradual and peaceful, as with the formation of welfare states in industrial countries and the reduction of infant mortality, the increase in life expectancy and other achievements in developing countries.

On the strength of the above, we submit and suggest that there is the need for peaceful but fundamental reform of Nigeria's poverty-reduction strategies through collective action and democracy.

If we are to reduce or alleviate poverty in Nigeria therefore, deliberate and sincere measures must be taken to tackle the causes and reduce the burden of poverty on Nigerians. Governments at various levels must similarly come up with genuine poverty-reduction strategies that are targeted at the most vulnerable groups in the society – farmers, the unemployed, women, etc. In addition, we also recommend that a pro-poor economic growth and an inclusive bottom-up process of policy formalization should be promoted to reduce poverty. Again, the role of civil society is crucial in the participation, monitoring and implementation of poverty-alleviation strategies; it should therefore be strengthened (Ijaiya and Ijaiya, 2003).

Finally, just as Kwakwa (2002) says, the only way out of the pervasive poverty in Nigeria is a bottom-up participatory approach that listens more to the poor and allows all stakeholders to come together to solve development problems. This would provide for better designs of poverty-reduction/alleviation strategies because programmes are more closely designed to the needs of the poor.

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Chapter 6

Neglecting Development Plans and Its Implications for Democracy

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Introduction

THEORETICALLY, development plans of any sort involve deliberate efforts on the part of government to speed up the process of social and economic development of a country. In some countries, such as the former Soviet Union with a socialist ideology, the development plan efforts were usually found to be rewarding, as the government was able to intervene directly and extensively in the lives of the people (Ogunjimi, 1997:97). Similarly, in other countries like the mixed advanced Western economies and many developing countries with a purely capitalist ideology, the economy is structured in such a way that though the interventionist role of the government is usually relatively small, there is always emphasis on the provision of a policy framework (i.e. through development plans) within which the economy and other sectors operate. What this means is that, in all areas of the economy, the need for a general framework in form of development plans cannot be overemphasized.

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