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10th January, 2019.

Dr. Mary Taiye Daniel,
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Dear Dr. Mary,

ACCEPTANCE OF CONFERENCE PAPER

This is to formally acknowledge the receipt of your reworked paper entitled: "An Appraisal of Poverty, Unemployment and Youth Restiveness in Contemporary Nigeria Society" that was co-presented at the 4th Biennial National Conference of the Centre for Ilorin Studies.

On behalf of the Centre, I hereby notify you that the paper had been assessed and accepted to be published in the Centre's Book of Readings entitled: *Human Security and the Survival of Ilorin Culture*.

We appreciate your input.

Thank you.

Dr. A.B. Ambali,
Publication Secretary,
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An Appraisal of Poverty, Unemployment and Youth Restiveness in Contemporary Nigeria Society

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Abstract

Poverty, a global phenomenon that is dynamic, complex and multi-dimensional is currently one of the most serious problems in our contemporary Nigerian society and the world. In view of the above, efforts are being made at the levels of government, the organized private sector, international donor agencies and NGOs to alleviate poverty so that man can live a meaningful life. The paper adopts historical method for its findings. The paper finds out that despite various strategies employs by successive government and other agencies at eradicating unemployment and youth restiveness in Nigeria, the scourge seems unbolting as a result of lack of seriousness on the part of government, lack of reliable population figures as benchmark for planning and neglect among others. The problem of poverty and unemployment continues to rare its ugly head because the prescribed solutions have failed to find out the root causes of poverty. The paper therefore recommended conducting a reliable and acceptable population census, government transparency and elimination of tribalism and favouritism by our political and religious leaders among others for sustainable poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

Keywords: Poverty, Poverty Alleviation, Unemployment, Youth, Nigeria.

Introduction

Poverty is a global phenomenon and it is one of the most serious problems facing humanity in recent times. Poverty is a concept that entails socio-economic and political deprivation which may affect individuals, households, or communities and which may result in lack of access to the basic necessities of life (Nasir, 2002:1). The World Bank (World Bank 1990) report sees poverty

as hunger, lack of shelter, being sick and not being able to go to school, not knowing how to read, not being able to speak properly, not having a job, having fear for the future, losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water, powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom. According to World Bank (United Nations, 1995) and United Nations (World Bank 1990) the various manifestations of poverty include: lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihood, hunger and malnutrition and other basic services, homelessness and unsafe degraded environment among others. From the above, it is clear that indicators of poverty include: literacy level, health status, nutrition status, access to housing, water sanitation etc. Poverty therefore is the inability to attend to, or meet up with the basic necessities of life as a result of lack of the wherewithal to do so.

It is saddening to note that about 1.5 billion people live below the poverty line of less than one dollar per day Worldwide, out of this number, 250 million constituting 17% of the World's total poor population are in Africa (FOS, 1999:11). The Department for International Development (DFID), Britain's agency for fighting poverty globally, disclosed that 90 million Nigerians live in absolute poverty, the figure represents the number of people living on less than one dollar a day. In this regard, the Agency warned that if nothing is done quickly to combat poverty the Millennium Development goal (MDG) will not be achieved in Africa or globally (Punch 2006). Also available data from the Federal Office of Statistics⁷ indicate that majority of the poor are located in the rural areas of Nigeria. For instance, in 1985 49.9% of the populations of rural areas were poor, declining to 46.1% in 1992 only to rise to 67.8% in 1996. In another development, the editorial comments of The Punch Newspaper of Thursday, January 1 1996 reviewed the level of poverty among Nigerians as follows:

There is too much poverty in the land and is unacceptable. Military pensioners in Lagos, Kwara, Ondo and other states protested Federal Government's negligence in paying them 42 months of accrued pensions. Many other Nigerians have not fared better. The epileptic public power supply has sent out of business several artisans and operators of small-scale industries nationwide. Many communities in the country, which were recently ravaged by cholera, would have been saved if a fraction of the huge oil windfall had been spent on the provision of deep wells, boreholes and other cheap sources of potable water (Punch, 1996).

(Obadan, 1997:13-19) Observes that the causes of poverty in Sub-Sahara Africa include inadequate access to employment opportunities, inadequate access to markets where the poor can sell goods and service making processes (Okon, 2012:32-42). Nigeria, that was one of the richest 50 countries in the early 1970s, has retrogressed to become one of the 25 poorest countries in the twenty first century. It is ironic that Nigeria is the sixth largest exporter of oil and at the same time host the third largest number of poor people after China and India (Okon, 2012:32-42). The following information contained in underscore the stark reality and dismal performance of Nigeria in the socio-economic spheres of life:

Nigeria possesses a stark dichotomy of wealth and poverty. Although the country is rich in natural resources, its economy cannot meet the basic needs of the people. Such disparity between the growth of the GDP and the increasing poverty is indicative of a skewed distribution of Nigeria's wealth. Given the nation's history of wide income disparity, which has manifested in large-scale poverty, unemployment, youth restiveness and poor access to healthcare, this disconnect between the country's economic growth and human development has to be addressed to increase the well-being of its people. Nigeria ranked 158 out of 177 economies on the Human Development Index, despite her rich cultural endowment and abundant human and natural resources. Human Development Index (HDI) 2010 ranks Nigeria 142nd position out of 169th listed on low human development. This position underscores not only the limited choices of Nigerians, but also defines the critical development challenges being faced by government (National Census Office 2006).

A majority of Nigeria's 196 million (Onah and Teletan, 2010:263-286) citizens live below the poverty line and have limited or no access to basic amenities, such as potable water, good housing, reliable transportation system, affordable healthcare facilities, basic education, sound infrastructure, security and sustainable sources of livelihood. It can be seen as a paradox that Nigeria claims to be experiencing economic growth annually; yet, the number of Nigerians living in poverty and unemployment seems to be rising geometrically particularly among the

rural dwellers. To be sure, it is posited that GDP per capita is \$2400 and over 50% of Nigerians live on less than \$1.25 a day (Omoyibo, 2013:29-36) (Ucha, 2010:46-56).

Furthermore, marginalization, overpopulation, insufficient resources, poor education, inequality, unemployment, corruption, non-diversification of the economy, bad governance, globalization, debt overhang, low productivity, unfocused government policies, etc. are also contributing factors to the high level of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria (Ibeanu, 2008). At the heart of the poverty debacle in Nigeria is that the management of the abundant natural and mineral resources has been grossly unfair to the teeming masses of Nigeria. This situation reinforces the paradox of affliction in the face of affluence (Onah and Ibietan, 2010:263-286) due to elite conspiracy and complicity in resource management (Okon, 2012:32-42).

The Concept of Poverty

The concept of poverty is too diverse to be summed into one definition, but attempts have been made to define it. According to (Bradshaw, 2006), poverty in its most general sense is the lack of basic necessities: food; shelter; medical care and safety that are generally thought to be necessary. For humanities needs are usually relative and are based on social definition and past experiences. (World Bank, 2013) in Sunderlin, Angelsen and Wunder, (n.d.) define poverty as a pronounced deprivation of well-being related to lack of material income or consumption, low levels of education and health, vulnerability and exposure to risk, no opportunity to be heard and powerlessness. The World Bank's definition correlates to a point in (Bradshaw, 2006) definition of poverty as a lack of necessities. But it goes further by increasing vulnerability, exposure to risk, no opportunity to be heard and powerlessness. This introduces a psychological dimension to the concept of poverty. Therefore, poverty might not only be income based in terms of definition, but can also include those living in lack (of necessities) and without the opportunity to be heard. (Oyekale, Adepoju and Balogun 2012:99-105) supports this by adding that in some (recent) literature, human poverty has graduated from being viewed as deprivation in income to include quality of life, risk, vulnerability, lack of autonomy, powerlessness and lack of self – respect. A United Nations statement (United Nation and Ucha, 2010:46-56) referred to poverty from the standpoint of vulnerability to risk, insecurity and powerlessness. It stated that:

Poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society.

It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to; not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living. not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living on marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation (Omoyibo, 2013:29-36)

(Adawo, 2011:14-19) defines poverty in two terms – subsistence (also called absolute/extreme) poverty and relative poverty. Absolute poverty describes a situation in which people barely exists, where the next meal may literally be a matter of life or death. It describes a lack of basic human needs such as adequate and nutritious food, clothing, housing, clean water and health services. On the other hand, he describes relative poverty as a process of encroaching deprivation by which people gradually slip out of the mainstream of social life, almost unnoticeably, without being the stereotype paupers in rags and tatters.

Similarly, (Adawo, 2011:14-19) summarises absolute and relative poverty to mean: Absolute poverty is a misery linked to an insufficient resource base, lack of income, narrow margin, high risk of failure, hunger, disease, etc.; while, relative poverty is associated with experiencing deviational outcomes from expectations and irrelevant comparison of one's material position with others, mostly peer and age groups.

The absolute poverty line income is below \$1.25 per day for the poorest countries, and \$1.90 per day for poor developing countries as propounded by the (World Bank 2015) is the commonly used method to measure poverty. Although, this method is not stable as the value of dollar is in a state of flux and as such can appreciate and depreciate from time to time. Besides, the poverty line for poor or developing countries cannot be used to measure poverty in industrialized countries. Countries like Japan and USA put their poverty lines at \$14 and \$26.19 per day because of the nature of their economic growth. Accordingly, (Narayan, Patel, Schafft, Rademacher, and Koch-Schulter 2000:12) proposed another strategy to determining poverty in any society. It is usually deemed that the lowest 10% or 5% is poor; so if a person finds himself within that social stratum, he can be deemed to be poor. However, considering the fact that not all societies are the same, this proposition might not be the best idea.

Unemployment and Youth Restiveness in Nigeria

The issue of unemployment has become an alarming issue in the country's economy especially during this period of global economic crunch. This is not only peculiar to advanced economies like England, France, United States of America, Germany etc but also to African continent like Togo, Benin and Ethiopia and Nigeria etc.

(Jhingan, 2008:18-20) submits that unemployment is one of the most sensitive and disturbing problem combatting the development of the contemporary Nigerian society. However, from the fore-going, it is clear that no country is free from the problem of unemployment and that explains why the pace of youth restiveness is very high in contemporary Nigerian society.

The words 'youth' and 'restiveness' have become so commonly used together in the last couple of years that it seems to have taken on a life of its own. In the last decade, there has been a proliferation of cases all over the country of youth agitations which left tons of people dead and valuable infrastructure as well as personal properties lost and destroyed. A sustained protestation embarked upon to enforce a desired outcome from a constituted authority by an organised body of youth, fits the label of youth restiveness. It is also a combination of any action or conduct that constitutes unwholesome, socially unacceptable activities engaged in by the youths in any community. It is a phenomenon which in practice has led to a near breakdown of law and order, low productivity due to disruption of production activities, increasing crime rate, intra-ethnic hostilities, and harassment of prospective developers and other criminal tendencies. Today the Northern part of Nigeria has literally erupted with unrivalled violence. Bomb blasts, kidnaps and killings of Nigerians and others have become the prevailing trend(vanguardngr.com/2012:1-3)

Unemployment is a hydra-headed monster which exists among the youth in all developing countries. The unemployment rate in Nigeria was last reported at 23.1 percent in 2018. (tradingeconomics.com, 2018) The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has put the figure of unemployed Nigerians at 23.9 per cent, up from 21.1 per cent in 2010 and 19.7 per cent in 2009. The National Population Commission (NPC) has said the country's population has risen from the 140,431,790 it was five years ago when the last national headcount was taken, to 167,912,561 as at October 2011 and 195,875,237 at 2018. This represents an annual population growth rate of 5.6 million people(vanguardngr.com/2012:1-3).

Unemployment has become chronic and intractable and it is the brain behind youth restiveness in State. This is because of a common saying that "an idle man is the devils workshop". The

acquisition of a certificate or degree was considered a sure passport to a paid employment either in the private or public sectors of the economy. Gloomy labour market situation has now been the case as young school leavers and university graduates that were expected to get easy (employment) are stranded and had taken to crime in our society. Youths have taken to crime as a means of getting their own share of the National cake, giving rise to chrome cases of youth restiveness in our contemporary society. (Ndibio, 2004:6-7) asserts that three youths were reported killed in Bodo city and twelve in Okirika both in Rivers State as a result of their criminal acts.

(Diegomoah, and Orimalada, 1991:60-62) described the situation thus:

“The gravity of the situation can be a gauged act whereas in the 1970s most university graduates were employed within the first three months of graduation. Because of the level of unemployment and youth restiveness in Rivers State, a lot of graduates have decided to go for criminal act rather than government work because they think it was more lucrative.

However, the need to overcome unemployment over the years has been Nigeria's greatest problem especially just as the wind of global financial crunch has been so devastating. Successive governments have adopted to go into several measures for proffering solutions to the global issue. Nigeria in a bid to combat youth restiveness has resorted to a massive employment generating schemes such as National Directorate of Employment, creation of the new Ministry of Niger Delta, Rivers State Government Micro loan scheme to empower rural dwellers, National poverty Alleviation programme, skill acquisition programmes. Operation Feed the Nation Programme of 1976 etc. The concept of unemployment is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. Thus, in recent years the rate has caused great concern not only to individuals but also to the general public as well as the policy makers. This is because the development purposes are consistently being channeled to curb or curtail the problems created by unemployment in the state, mostly insecurity matters caused by the aggrieved youths, (Jhingan, 2008:18-20).

Occupationally, Nigerians were farmers and fishermen. But because of the activities of multinational oil companies, especially oil spillage in the southern part of the nation, most of those primary economic activities are no longer been pursued. They no longer see most of these

businesses as suitable jobs for their social status either as university graduates or oil producing communities; hence they now take to youth restiveness, crime, prostitution and other forms of anti-social vices. (Jhingan, 2008:18-20). These youths, with the guise of unemployment have remained a great threat to political stability as they are consistently involved in creating hostile socio-economic and political environments for the government and oil industry. Armed robbery attacks are persistent, youths forming various gangs of cultism, prostitution and consistent marital are some of instabilities are some of the effects which unemployment has left in its trail.

Appraisal and Way Forward

The rising tide of unemployment according to Minister for Agriculture, Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, 2010 to 2015, noted that Nigeria's unemployment rate is spiralling upwards, growing at 11 per cent yearly, According to him "Youth unemployment rate is over 50 per cent. Our unemployment rate is spiralling, driven by the wave of four million young people entering the workforce every year with only a small fraction able to find formal employment(vanguardngr.com/2014:2).

and the fear of a bleak future among the youth in African countries have made them vulnerable to the manipulations of agents' provocateurs".

These include aggrieved politicians, religious demagogues, and greedy multinationals that employ these youths to achieve their selfish ambitions. It is clearly evident that the absence of job opportunities in developing countries is responsible for youth restiveness with disastrous consequences. This leaves in its trails; low productivity, intra-ethnic hostilities, unemployment, poverty, prostitution and environmental degradation. Exuberance: Very often, the youth are described as full of youthful exuberance. This raw energy has of late been channelled into unwholesome and socially unacceptable venture that threaten the very fabrics of the community. Also the issue of availability and accessibility of drugs in street corners which predispose the youth to abnormal behaviours when they come under their influence, adds to youth restiveness. It is also believed that some disgruntled leaders, elders and politicians in our society resort to recruiting youth for settling scores or using them against perceived enemies. With this trend, the activities of

these youth have degenerated to outright criminality. Once these youth get mobilised for these nefarious activities, they become uncontrollable and the society suffers.

Poverty connotes inequality and social injustice and this traumatizes the poor. More than 70 per cent of people in Nigeria are in abject poverty, living below the poverty line, and one-third survive on less than one US dollar a day (FOS, 1999:13). This figure includes an army of youth in urban centers in Nigeria who struggle to eke out a living by hawking chewing sticks, bottled water, handkerchiefs, belts, etc. The sales per day and the profit margin on such goods are so small that they can hardly live above the poverty line. Disillusioned, frustrated, and dejected, they seek an opportunity to express their anger against the state. Scholars have overtime agreed that there is a link among poverty, loss of livelihood, inequality, and youth restiveness as evidenced by the numerous violent protests against the wielders of power in Nigeria (vanguardngr.com/2014). Inadequate Educational Opportunities and Resources -Quality education has a direct bearing on national prestige, greatness, and the dwindling resources of government at both federal and state levels as a result of economic meltdown.

Lack of Basic Infrastructure; most rural communities and urban slums in Nigeria have no access to potable water, health and communication facilities, electricity, industries, etc. Behind social unrest and youth restiveness in the country is the agitation for equitable distribution of resources. Inadequate Communication and Information flow; Communication creates room for sharing information. It helps people express their thoughts and feelings, clarify problems, and consider alternative ways of coping or adapting to their situation. Such sharing promotes social cohesion. People must have access to communication facilities, to communicate with the people making the decisions that affect them. Sadly, rarely do people in Nigeria participate in decision-making processes on issues that affect their lives.

Way Forward

For poverty to be alleviated in Nigeria, the following are inevitable:

1. Investment in infrastructure that directly enhance productive capacities (For instance water supply or irrigation schemes and prevention of erosion can have a high economic return through increased agricultural output. Other infrastructure such as access to good roads from farm to market centers can stimulate and promote productive activities hence,

lasting employment. Social infrastructure such as: schools, healthcare centers create some permanent jobs in addition to meeting the basic needs of rural communities.

2. Special attention should be given to the needs of the marginalized, disadvantaged and vulnerable segments of the population including women, youth empowerment and self-sufficiency. A minimum of twenty-five percent of the federal budget should be committed to agriculture, rural development, poverty alleviation and youth development programmes to meet the recommendation of the 21st FAO regional conference for Africa held in Yaounde Cameroon in 2000 (FOS, 1999:15).
3. Conduct a reliable and acceptable population census that can be a benchmark for planning and also enhanced probity and accountability at all levels of government (Olorunfemi, 2001).

Findings

The researcher in course of this work, made the following observations as a result of his findings:

1. Youths in Nigeria in particular are really in a serious business of kidnapping and hostage taking, robbery, militancy and many other immoral acts to protest their unemployment.
2. Governments are spending more on insecurity of the state caused by the restive youths of the nation (Nigeria).
3. There are officials of government who are accomplice to this crime of kidnapping and hostage taking. Especially as the militants now kidnap and come for negotiations with the government based on expectant percentages from the handouts.
4. These corrupt officials know how much they force government to pay as to enable them have their own share. Otherwise, why should a militant who has come for negotiation with the government over kidnapped expatriate(s) not be arrested and prosecuted.

Conclusion

Nigeria can fully develop if she can sincerely tackle the unemployment, poverty and among others with her potentials and all the available resources at her disposal. This work is not shining away from the reality of poverty in Nigeria. The work therefore has taken an in-depth look at unemployment and youth restiveness in Nigeria and considered the theoretical stand points of various academic authorities.

An adage says; an idle mind is the devils workshop, youths without gainfully employed will not only be restless but will surely engage in anti-social activities, that will become vices and menace to the progress and development of the society. It is therefore necessary for all hands to be on desk to look for a better solution in solving unemployment in our nation.

It is obvious that no economy of the world can completely tackle the issue of unemployment; hence it needs collaborated efforts of both the government and private sector to find solution to the problem of unemployment and youth restiveness.

Recommendations

The researcher, therefore in course of this work and to save Nigeria from total collapse on the issue of unemployment and poverty in particular, made the following suggestions:

1. The study recommends establishment of skills acquisition centers in all the wards in the state to reduce the pace of crime and unemployment.
2. Multinational companies in the area should lay more emphasis on labour intensive rather than capital intensive. This would help for the employment of manual labourers.
3. Government should provide infrastructural facilities in the rural areas to reduce the pace of rural-urban migration. Infrastructural development may make the youths to be self-reliant.
4. Government should provide loans to the less privileged or to the poor in the rural areas to motivate them.
5. Sports development should be encouraged, especially at the grass root so as to keep the mind of the youths' busy from crime.
6. Religious leaders should redirect their programmes to carry the youths along.
7. Citing of more police stations or posts in the rural areas will equally reduce the pace of crime and violence.
8. The issue of tackling unemployment, poverty and youth restiveness should be collective and not to be left in the hands of only the government.
9. For poverty and unemployment to be eradicated, there is need for the nation to have stability in governance. There must be continuity of government policies. Lack of continuity of government policies has led to death of a number of good policies, such as Peoples Bank, DFRRI, National Directorate of Employment (NDE); some of the good policies that are already

dead would have helped in alleviating poverty and put permanent smiles on the face of Nigerians.

10. There is the need to get the poor people involved in the “fashioning out of poverty alleviation strategies.” A solution given or suggested by the poor people who the programme is meant for, would likely work better than policies suggested by the ruling elite class Binta, A. (2006). The man who wears a shoe knows better where the shoe is giving him discomfort.

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