

MANAGING IMMEDIATE ACTION FOR WOMEN AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN NIGERIA: AN EXPLANATION FROM THE GENERIC THEORY

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria has a longstanding and lingering poverty obstacle despite she has been tried many series of anti-poverty programmes and policies in her history to alleviate the problem in the economy. However, this paper attempts to examine the managing immediate action for women and poverty reduction in Nigeria, especially in Kwara state, using generic theory or simply blaming the system explanation. Under the premise that the poverty is basically caused among the women in the country by the system and society as opposed to the causes of poverty by the individual poor women, themselves. This paper is based largely on academic research that is currently undertaken by the researcher on Kwara state, Nigeria. The paper is conceptual in nature and analytical method is used based on the previous literature to give account to prompt action to manage the poverty situation particularly of the women in the state. The finding shows that government is much more responsible for the longstanding poverty in the country through her inability and failure to provide sufficient socioeconomic amenities for the public and managing the existing ones. It is concluded that the government should try to manage and procure adequate socioeconomic amenities that can assist directly and indirectly, the masses particularly women to reduce poverty incidence in the country. Finally, some policy measures are being recommended to tackle the problem of poverty in general.

Keywords: Women, poverty reduction, Nigeria, generic theory

INTRODUCTION

Since Nigeria got independence in 1960, the country has been struggling to alleviate poverty in her economy. Many efforts and measures have been taken by the economy through various policies and programmes to alleviate this chronic disease. Through, these programmes poor people are given relatively small capital to establish themselves on small scale business and the target-population of the programmes are rural poor, illiterates, women and unemployed graduates in urban centre. Kwara state is one of oldest state in country created in 1967. The tormentor of poverty in the state is something more than mere measurement of household's income, expenditure or wellbeing. This involves lack of access to public utilities and other services, poor and dilapidated infrastructure, illiteracy and ignorance, poor health care, social and economic insecurity as well as political exclusion and oppression. Nigeria has a longstanding and lingering poverty problem despite she has tried many anti-poverty measures since her independence. Albeit, poverty is being described as a multidimensional in nature (Ogunleye, O. S. 2010), Nigerian system also exacerbates the situation in the country. Infrastructures which are basic public services or socioeconomic services such as road networks, water supply, electricity supply, transportation and communication network, education, and health service are significantly necessary for the economy of the country to be at well-functional state. According to the Global Poverty Project (GPP), without school

people cannot educate their children, without hospital or clinic people cannot access healthcare service, and to transport our produces or goods to market for sale it requires good roads, therefore, it is very difficult to trade properly in the absence of these.

GENERIC THEORY

Previously, there are certain theories of poverty in history with different approaches and dimensions employed to give explanation to the series of causes of poverty in a society. In any system or society the conceptualization, measurement of problem as well as the application of policy is contained with formulation of poverty theory. The generic theories of poverty view those factors that cause poverty in an aggregate or totality. The theories are much concerned on the problems generated from the macro economy rather than the micro economy, that is, national economic problems as opposed to the individual socio-economic traits. In other words, "blaming the system" explanation posits that continuous suffering of the individuals is as a result of various social factors and forces which include the structures of social and economic systems, specific institutions and/or institutional regulations and demands, political programs and policies, various cultural...social interaction such as racism, sexism, and ageism, which prevent peculiar individuals and groups equal right to enjoy social and economic opportunities and resources. Poverty is hardly attributed to the individual defects in this situation. In a situation where there is inadequate job opportunities in the economy and some people cannot find work to do or other can get but underemployed, the reason for be unemployed and impoverished cannot be blamed on individuals in such society (Ryan, W. 1971 cited in Ropers & Hinton, 1991; Tussing, 1975; Kerbo, H. R. 2006; Ragayah Haji Mat Zin, 2011, cited in Rajah Rasiah, 2011:218).

RESEARCH METHOD

This paper is conceptual in nature and analytical method is being used to give account of the general causes of poverty and most especially women. Previous literature and studies on the poverty situation in Nigeria are used in this study. Data and information are collected through the libraries, recognized journals both local and international, report on the Nigerian poverty profile, by the National Bureau of statistics as well as internet. This simply suggests that secondary sources are predominantly used in the methodology of this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW ANALYSIS

This paper will analyze the previous research done by at least 20 authors or researchers regarding the topic of poverty, women's poverty and causes of poverty. Four main themes will be outlined to be analyzed accordingly. The themes are; *firstly*, Concept of poverty, *secondly*, Poverty in Nigeria and Kwara State, *thirdly*, Women and poverty, and *forth*, Causes of poverty. The literature review analysis is as follows;

Concept of Poverty

There is no specific definition for poverty and many see it as multi-dimensional situations which mean different thing to different people, societies and countries. It is quite difficult for the humanity to comprehend the concept of poverty and the coincident poverty reduction measures as the latter has no consensus (Akindola, R. B. 2010; Aderonmu, J. A. 2010).

Poverty is classified into two forms: absolute poverty and relative poverty. "The former means that a person's basic subsistence needs (for food, clothing, and shelter) are not being met while the latter means that a person's needs are not being met in comparison with the rest of his or her society" (Alters, S. M. 2009:1-2). In the Human Development Report 1997, cited by her, UNDP incorporated two distinct elements to the standard definitions of poverty, that

is income poverty and human poverty where each further sub-divided into two. The income poverty consists of extreme and overall poverty. The first is the inability to meet basic food needs, which are defined by minimum calorie requirements while the second is the inability to afford food and other basic needs, such as shelter, clothing and energy. The human poverty also includes direct and indirect of poverty on human life. The first effects of poverty on people include illiteracy, hunger and malnutrition, shortened life spans, illness or death from serious diseases ... while the second effects include a sheer lack of access to essentials such as energy, sanitation, clean drinking water, health care, transportation and communication services.

Pramanik, A. H. et al., (2008: 3) suggests additional form of poverty aside from aforementioned income and human poverty as hard core or abject or perverse poverty which is a situation of the existence of extreme deprivation for being unable to meet even minimum food needs, which resulted in malnourishment, loss of vitality of life, productivity as well as consequently absent basic minimum to survive. Whereas Idowu, A. and Oyeleye, O. A. (2012) views poverty as a peculiar situation or condition where people are exempted from participating in activities in a given country or society as well as prevention of income necessary to satisfy their basic requirements for life survival, such as food, accommodation, training skill and working tools.

According to Animashaun, I. A. (2010), he views poverty as lack of access to both visible and invisible items which can improve the level of welfare such as shelter, drinkable water, food, security, education, health care and other services. While Aku, et al. (1997) cited in Ijaya, I. G. et al., (2011), sees poverty as deprivation of someone from certain aspects of life such as personal and physical, economic, social, cultural and political deprivation. Meanwhile, poverty has also been considered as a situation in which an individual finds it difficult to attain minimum living standard. A situation or condition that deprives or incapacitates a person to have reasonable access to basic necessities such as food and non-food requirements which can give him/her meaningful life in a society (Arogundade, K. K. et al., 2011).

Poverty in Nigeria and Kwara State

Available statistical data on the trend of poverty in Nigeria show that overtime, there had been increase in the incidence of poverty in the country. According to National Bureau of statistics (NBS) on the Nigeria poverty profile accounts for the absolute and relative poverty in the country for 2004, 2010 and 2011. The absolute poverty for the three years is in percentage of 54.7, 60.9 and 61.9, respectively while for the relative poverty percentage for the three years is 54.4, 69.0 and 71.5, respectively. For dollar per day, the same percentage (62.8) recorded for the year 2004 and 2011 although this has to be influenced by the exchange rates. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) expects the country poverty incidence to witness drastic reduction by the year 2015, the percentage of people living under one dollar (\$1) per day to be at 21.35% (MDGs 2010: Nigeria MDGs Report 2010:14). With this trend of Nigerian poverty record it is doubtful perhaps the country can attain the percentage by year 2015. For Kwara state separately, in the year 2010, poverty level in the state in percentage for both absolute and relative is 61.8 and 74.3, respectively (see table 1 below). It is just slight difference between the percentages for the whole country and Kwara state in terms of absolute and relative poverty in the year 2010. But dollar per day poverty for Kwara state was at 79.85% as of the year 2005 (NBS 2005). Anyanwu, J. C. (2012) finds in his study that North central geopolitical zone (comprises of Niger, Kwara, Kogi, Benue, Plateau and Nassarawa) of Nigeria has higher tendency of being poor along with other

geopolitical zones like Northeast, Southeast, Southwest and Southsouth which have declined the chances of being poor.

Table 1. Nigeria Poverty Numbers and Percentages

	2004 (%)	2010 (%)	2011 (%) Est.
Estimated Population (mil.)	126.3	163	168
Relative Poverty	54.4	69	71.5
Absolute Poverty	54.7	60.9	61.9
Dollar Per Day	62.8	61.2	62.8

Sources: National Bureau of Statistics, NBS, Nigeria Poverty Profile 2010.

From table 2 below, it shows that larger percentage of people concentrate between being poor and moderate while very few are fairly rich and rich in Nigeria. The situation of Kwara state is similar to the Nigeria's one in term of concentration of wealth in the hands of few, mostly the politicians and the few businessmen associated with the former. Only 2.6% of the total population is considered rich in Kwara state which is very insignificant. It implies that the state government needs to be more tasked on how to reduce the level of poverty in the state. More so, there is more poverty concentrated in the rural area as compared to the urban area in Nigeria. About 53.5% are poor in the rural area as compared to 36.2% in the urban area.

Table 2. Household Assessment of Livelihood: Subjective Poverty Measurement

	Very Poor (%)	Poor (%)	Moderate (%)	Fairly Rich (%)	Rich (%)
Urban	6.1	30.1	56.2	6.3	1.2
Rural	11.6	41.9	41.2	4.5	0.8
Total	9.5	37.2	47.2	5.2	0.9
Kwara	3.8	36.6	57.0	2.4	0.2

Sources: NBS, Nigeria Poverty Profile 2010.

Based on the core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire Survey (CWIQS) carried out by the NBS in 2006 revealed that total poverty head count for Kwara state was 83.3 per cent while head count for both rural and urban areas of the state were 95.9 and 97.3 per cent, respectively (Ijaiya, 2011). Women are the majority in this poverty problem for the whole country and for the Kwara state in per se. From this study there is no doubt that Nigerian women are seriously suffering in the society both in rural and urban areas of Kwara state the number of poor among women is very high. This is clear indication that Nigeria has trouble with her economy in general as the incidence of poverty far beyond what can be internationally even domestically accepted for poverty magnitude for any given country or society to develop.

Poverty incidence of Kwara state in 2006 was 67.5% with distribution of incidence of 2.4 in the same year whereas, for the whole Nigeria the incidence of poverty and the distribution of incidence for the same year are 65.6% and 100.0, respectively (Alaye-Ogan, E. O. 2008:54-55). This shows that the number of population that fall below poverty line in Kwara state is exceeded that of the entire Nigeria's.

Women and Poverty

In Nigeria, the main victims of poverty are small farm households, illiterate households, and households with large family sizes, households headed by women, unemployed graduates, women and elderly ones, who are rarely accessed to socioeconomic safety nets. Nigerians, especially women are worse off in the economy due to the wickedness of poverty since eighty up till today. As individual women had been affected so do their families, as they are in many instances responsible to take care of children and home in general. Whereas, they are being deprived and denied from accessing many basic amenities such as electricity, safe drinking water, housing, education, health care, e.t.c (Adepoju, A. 2004). Poverty in the country is appear to be feminization of poverty that is the situation which is frequent in the midst of women-headed households than in the midst of men-headed households due to discrimination and bias against the erstwhile at different levels and sectors in the economy. In terms of job opportunity, women are with less chance to be given appointment, they are being paid lower income in the working place and similarly backward in terms of education as compared to men. Going with all these factors, women in Nigeria are considered to be poorer than men (Anyanwu, J. C., 2010).

It has been argued that the bitter realities in Nigeria is the experience of rising poverty and the Nigerian women have different ways of experiencing this problem of poverty as compared to their counterpart men. The erstwhile are economically being deprived, socially being discriminated, politically being marginalized, culturally being saddened, and ecologically being affected. For the women in the country, all these threats are had become part of their daily lives, in other words, they are simply living with these problems. The struggle of women in the country is more importantly to ensure food security, nutrition, and good health of their family, community and the entire country despite all these they are only being rewarded negatively (Sofu, C. A. & Toni, P., n.d.:48). It has been differently argued that men are more food secure than women, particularly those women-headed households, in the sense that women are expend their income mostly to support the family members especially the children in terms of food, nutrition, and general development (OlubunmiIdowu Yetunde Ajani, 2013:IFPRI). Upon all the efforts of the government in participating and collaborating with the international community with regard to the women empowerment and recognition in the society, the women still have higher number of poor in the country as compared to men. The government has yet to pull them out of poverty problem in the society.

“According to a gender analysis of poverty in Nigeria, poverty has a feminine face. Women lag behind men in most indicators of socio-economic development. Women constitute the majority of the poor, the unemployed and the socially disadvantaged, and they are the hardest hit by the current economic recession, with about 52 percent of rural women living below the poverty line. Unfortunately, most poverty alleviation policies of the government lack special provisions for women. Gender inequality in disfavor of women features prominently in access to and control of land, credit facilities, technologies, education and health, and as a result, women are more vulnerable to poverty than men.” (OlubunmiIdowu Yetunde Ajani, 2013: IFPRI).

Mostly women in rural areas that comprises of larger percentage of the population that lives below the designated poverty line in the country can only survive with relatively limited social services and infrastructural facilities. They are majorly relied on the agricultural activities to support themselves and their family members for food consumption and small income. Fayomi, O. O. (2009) argues that the poverty situation of Nigeria is the concept of feminization of poverty in the sense that women make larger percentage of the poor, out of 61.9% absolute poverty in the country. Women are also suffering from gender inequalities at

various levels and sectors such as economic, social and political spheres of development in which aggravate their disadvantaged position in the country.

Part of the challenges put forward that impoverish women that are sheabutter producers in Fufu community in Ilorin south local government areas in Kwara state are lack of access to piped borne water, unreliable power supply, inadequate health facilities, problem with transportation and access to markets. Despite the fact that these local producers are industrious, their product attract foreign demand, earning income and supporting the family members, thus those challenges mentioned above deprive them from producing more and better for the economy in Kwara state. Although, Empowerment of African Women Organization (EOAWO) has prepared to give necessary support to these women in agriculture in order to alleviate poverty among them and eventually bring sustainable growth and development to the state at large

(www.eoaw.org/index.php?option=com...view...women...).

Women in Kwara state has been confirmed poorer than their counterpart men in the rural area. According to the study carried out by Olorunsanya, E. O. and Omotesho, O. A. (2011) in the North Central of Nigeria using Kwara state as a case study found that women-headed households were more less-privileged than their counterpart men-headed households in the state. Likewise, widow-headed households are more significantly deprived or disadvantaged compared to the mere women-headed households in the state. The study was carried out among the rural farming households in the state and the data from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics, social indicators and Foster-Greer-Thorbecke class of weighted poverty indices.

Similarly, the founder of An Islamic Charity Group, Ar-Rahmah Zakat Foundation, Femi Omo-owo in Ogun state, Nigeria claims that there is widespread of poverty in the state therefore, the institution is mainly established to effectively and efficiently used the Zakat money to assist the financially-poor people to uplift their lives. The foundation targets those women that engaged in small scale enterprises in the state in order to keep their business moving, a way of economically empower the women in the state. This gesture is in line with the purpose of Zakat in Islam which is to ensure equitable distribution of wealth and resources in the Muslim society (Sunday Punch, 2013:5). End up, women should being provided a good facilities to support of their contribution to the society (MegatDaud et. al, 2013) and withdraw them from the poverty circulation.

Causes of Poverty

Ijaiya, G. T. et al., (2011) has pointed out that part of the causes of poverty in Kwara state can be attributed to insufficient or lack of socioeconomic amenities and services such as electricity supply, pipe borne water supply, roads and transportation network, sanitation facilities in which are burden for the people in the state and equally particularly affect the businesses in the state. Problem of all these necessary facilities of lives are poorly provided in the state due to their interruption in supply. Business women hardly well prosper in their micro businesses because most of these socioeconomic facilities and services that are expected to aid their venture are either poorly supplied or not there at all. Therefore, this leads many businesses to bear unnecessarily huge cost of production in which subsequently lead to higher market prices of goods and services in the state. More so, this dwindle away lion share of their profit/income to be enjoyed after the sale and equally exacerbate their living condition. They further argue that in the history, Karl Marx viewed the operation of capitalists as a way of impoverishing the labourer in the society of Europe which resulted in so-called industrial reserved army. Although to the capitalists, it was a labour-saving technique which brought about increase in production and profit. Meanwhile, Marx termed

this as profiteering as it reduced labour merely to the low subsistence level of wages, create pull of unemployment and eventually, exacerbate the welfare of the many proletariat and their families.

Poor and interrupted power supply has become mundane issue in Nigeria's economy, big issue that creates greater concern to both Nigerian authority as well as Nigerian people because of the constant problem causing for the economy. Failure of the government to restore the electricity and related amenities has been considered jeopardizing the efforts of many ordinary Nigerians in businesses, likewise, causing more people to be poor. According to the World Bank Vice President for Africa, Dr. Mukhtar Diop (2013), without steady power supply poverty would still remain big challenge in the economy despite recent eight percent economic growth witnessed by the country, as the lives of people would continue to be worsening and long-term capital projects are discouraged in the economy, both domestically and strategically, due to lack of improvement in the infrastructures.

However, various anti-poverty programs and policies introduced in the country and of course, in Kwara state, have largely failed to overcome the three reasons for this persistent poverty that is, social, economic and political problems facing the country since the inception of the programmes. NAPEP was introduced since 2001 till date to replace those previously failed poverty alleviation programmes. The finding in the study carried out on the effectiveness of the poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria between 1980s and first decade of the 21st century, a case study of Enugu state by (Ntunde, F. O. & Oteh, C. O. 2011) shows that many poverty alleviations programmes introduced in Nigeria were failed to have significantly positive impact on the lives of the target-groups, the poor. In other words, they are hardly reduced poverty level and rate in the country. The rationales behind their failure are attributed to insufficient funds to run the programmes, mismanagement of available resources as well as lack of infrastructures.

Similarly, Aderonmu, J. A. (2010) laments that no significant outcome despite all the resources both human and capital devoted on alleviating the lives of the rural dwellers by the past governments in Nigeria through their various poverty reduction programmes. Among the reasons account for their failure include low level of participation by the poor, lack of political will, corruption and poor accountability, discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, religion and party affiliation, more so, over reliance on grants and loans from international financial institutions and other private donor agencies, in which their attached conditions eventually affect the poor's needs and interest. Arogundade, et al., (2011) are of the similar view as they suggested different anti-poverty agency to replace the existing one in order to serve the people better by alleviating poverty in them and not causing more poverty for them.

Some of these macroeconomic policies introduced to fight poverty appear to be adding to the problem because, the more these anti-poverty measures are introduced the worse is the incidence of poverty in the country and also in Kwara state. This can be justified from the data on the Nigerian poverty by the National Bureau of Statistics, NBS 2010. Absolute poverty in the country increases by 7.2% between 2004 and 2011 (54.7 and 61.9, respectively). This shows that instead for the programmes and the policies to reduce the poverty level, the reverse is the case in the country's situation. It equally means that the latter are causing the country and the state to be poorer.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is revealed that the general causes of poverty and of women poverty in particular are multiple with different facets. Many literatures and studies have shown that those causes are much more related to socioeconomic issues and national economic system which are beyond

the influence of the individual poor especially women. Since the poor group is handicapped to prevent the situation like this, they remain in poverty until the system changes to favour them. Mostly, women in Nigeria and of course, in Kwara state are potential to be living above the poverty line of one dollar per capita per day it is unfortunate that they could not meet up with this level because of other exogenous factors which are not created by them. The blame is on the system and the society that create hardship for the poor and failure of the government to manage and provide sufficient socioeconomic infrastructures that can assist to improve the incomes of the women in enterprises and reduce their suffering. As Yahaya, K. A. et al. (2011) pointed out that government in the state ought to make essential availability of the major infrastructures that could greatly assist to improve the productivity of the micro entrepreneurs that characterizes by women.

Besides, there are some causes of poverty in Nigerian society that are controllable ones like those associated with economic, social and political, in the sense that they can be checked by the system or government by placing on ground strong policy which can be implemented. Even those ones that are viewed as uncontrollable they can be controlled by the system or government if they are responsible enough to do so. For instance, flooding and storm which their effects further impoverish some rural poor and particularly rural women can be controlled by providing necessary drainages and strong policy and inspection on housing structures that can minimize the effects of these on the poor people. Likewise the rapidly increase in the incidence of population of Nigeria can be checked by reasonable population and immigration policy. Albeit, the genesis of this can be traced or attributed to the micro level as individual household responsible for its control but still government can put in place at least an effective moderate birth control measure for the sake of the economy. Alternatively, since population is considered as a resource for any given country, Nigeria can make optimal utilization of this by turning it to asset for the economy instead of viewing it as liability in the system. With availability of other natural resources and endowment in the country, the current population figure can be manageable. Can individual Nigerians or women do all these? Definitely no, only the system or government can do them.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study has proved that the causes of poverty cannot be blamed on the individual poor rather the blame should be shouldered by the system and the society at large. Most especially, the government has created a lot of economic and social difficulties in the lives of Nigerian masses, particularly women. We can justify this from the former's injustice in the distribution of national income and resources, wastage of national resources on different and abortive anti-poverty programmes, ineffective macro-economic policies, structural corruption, mismanagement and poor administration. Although there are immediate causes of poverty such as civil unrest, religious and ethnic tensions continue to reoccur day in day out in different parts of Nigeria result in outbreaks of violence in which in turn aggravate poverty and malnutrition. Those women previously lived in these troubled areas and are forced to return home find it hard to survive without getting anything tangible doing as their businesses had been destroyed because of series of violence.

Based on the results of this study, the following policy measures are being recommended to tackle the problem of poverty in general and of women poverty in particular in the state:

1. Government should ensure regular basic necessities such as provision of power and safe drinking water, health care and motorable roads, since these basic necessities are most needed by the poor especially women both for their micro business and life

in general, for instance, is likely to attract women entrepreneurs, a development which could revamp both local and national economy.

2. Anti-poverty programmes, measures, initiative, strategies and agencies, particularly National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) need to be reformed and restructured, so that the goal of eradicating poverty in the country can be attained without further delay, as scrapping of this peculiar programme is not the best option to address its ineffectiveness.
3. Workable macroeconomic policies that are people-friendly ones need to be introduced.
4. Islamically, if the government can formally support and standardize the management of Zakat and Waqf collection among Nigerian Muslims which are the sources of alleviating poverty in Islam, it would be a such of help to the government of the day to achieve her goal of poverty eradication in the country, reduce government spending on poverty and attain faster economic growth and development in the country.

Revert to the poverty scenario and women as the key point in this paper, it is agreed that this paper is limited to the data available from the literature review analysis. Thus, this paper is suggested to expand the scope of the study to be more focus on the enhancing women empowerment as a strategy of poverty alleviation in Kwara State, Nigeria to be conducted in future research.

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