

Appraising the Institutional Framework for Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Nigeria

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Abstract

Africa harbours most of the poorest countries of the world because of so many factors such as internecine wars and ethnic strife, natural disasters, foreign debt corruption amongst several others. A reliable data also claimed that one out of every five Africans is a Nigerian. Presently, Africa owes 350 billion dollars, while Nigeria owes over 32 billion dollars. Despite the plethora of poverty alleviation programme which past governments had initiated and implemented, by 1999 when the Obasanjo administration came into power a World Bank's report indicated that Nigeria's Human Development Index (HDI) was only 0.416 and that about 70 percent of the population was vegetating below the bread line. These alarming indicators prompted the government to review the existing poverty alleviation schemes with a view to harmonising them to make them achieve the desired results. This paper examines the conceptual and institutional frameworks for tackling poverty in Nigeria. The paper also discusses the causes and effects of poverty in Nigeria. The paper is treated in four parts. Part one examines the definitions of poverty, the causes and effects of the prevailing and widespread poverty. Part two examines the social, political, environmental, technological and economical context of poverty and argues that all these factors are interlinked, and that no one area can be isolated for overall responsibility for the underlying causes of poverty in Nigeria. Neglect in one area would have consequences for the others. Part three examines institutional frameworks for tackling poverty in Nigeria, its strengths and inadequacies. Arguing that poverty has moved from its traditional monolithic understanding to a more complex or hydra headed one, part four of the paper makes recommendation for improvement towards alleviating poverty in Nigeria.

Key words: Poverty alleviation, Nigeria, Africa

JEL classification: O19, O53

I. Introduction

This paper examines the institutional framework for poverty alleviation programme in Nigeria. The available data reveals that Nigeria is one of the countries of the world that has greater number of poor people. The statistics on human development and social provision further reveal that the population of Nigeria is increasingly becoming one of the poorest in the world, and that Nigeria as a whole, is in a very vulnerable position. Although, successive governments in Nigeria have at one time or the other put up a lot of poverty alleviation programmes, but surprisingly on the assumption of power in 1999, by the present government led by President Obasanjo, the World Bank's report indicated that Nigeria's Human Development Index (HDI) was only 0.416 and that about 70% of the population was vegetating below the breadline. Some of the attempts made in the past to alleviate poverty include the establishment of the Department of Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) with the major aims of opening up the rural areas and to improve the conditions of the vulnerable poor; this project had long been abandoned. The establishment of National Directorate of Employment (NDE) to tackle the problem of mass unemployment. The establishment of People's Banking Nigeria (PBN) to cater for the credit needs of the less privileged Nigerians. Others included the Better Life Programme (BLP) which was gender specific. It was meant to improve the life of rural women. The programme was later replaced by Family Support Programme (FSP). The programmes failed because the programmes were hijacked by position seeking individuals, who used most of the resources for personal aggrandisement rather than for the set objectives. Others such as National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA), The Strategic Grains Reserve Authority (SGRA) and the Accelerated Crop Production (ACP) were all established to improve the productive capacities of peasant farmers as well as improving their incomes and well-being. To assist in the eradication of illiteracy, which was found to be a major cause of poverty, The Nomadic and Adult Education Programmes were established. Amongst the reasons why the past poverty alleviation attempts failed were:

- (i) the politics of personal rule – a distinctive type of political system in which the rivalries and struggles of powerful and wilful persons, rather than impersonal institutions, ideologies, public offices, or class interests, are fundamental in shaping political life
- (ii) the master and servant relationships associated with the programmes to alleviate poverty. Government claims to know and understand what poverty is, who the poor are and what they need in order to alleviate poverty, whereas, only the poor understands poverty and it is only him that tell how it can be alleviated.

However, with the return of democracy on May 29, 1999, the Federal Government has embarked on poverty reduction programmes. Specifically, government has put in place a National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in the year 2002. The programme was aimed at eradicating abject poverty in Nigeria. The rest of the paper is divided into four sections. Section 2 gives the definition of poverty, its causes and effects of the prevailing and widespread poverty. Section 3 examines the social, political, environmental, technological and economical context of poverty and demonstrates that all these factors are inter-linked. Section 4 examines the strengths and inadequacies of institutional framework for tackling poverty in Nigeria. The section also includes the summary, conclusion and recommendations.

II. Conceptual Clarification

Ravallion and Bidani (1994) refer to poverty as a lack of command over basic consumption needs, that is, a situation of inadequate level of consumption; giving rise to insufficient food, clothing and shelter. Aluko N.L. (1975), Sen N.L. (1987) defined poverty as lack of certain capabilities, such as being able to participate with dignity in societal endeavours.

Poverty has also been defined as the inability to attain a minimum standard of living (World Development Report, 1990). The report constructed two indices based on a minimum level of consumption in order to show the practical aspect of the concept. While the first index was a country-specific poverty line, the second was global, allowing cross-country comparisons (Walton, 1990).

Other indices invoked by United Nations include life expectancy, infant morality rate, primary school ratios and number of persons per physician.

Tables 1-3: show the poverty situation in Nigeria

Table 1: Poverty Level in Nigeria 1980-1997

Year	Estimated Total Population (millions)	Population in Poverty (millions)	Poverty Level %
1980	65	17.7	27.2
1985	75	34.7	46.3
1992	91.5	39.2	42.9
1996	102.3	67.1	65.6

Source: Federal Office of Statistics, 2001.

Table 2: The Poor and Core Poor in Nigeria

Year	Non-poor %	Moderately poor %	Core poor %
1980	72.8	21.0	6.2
1985	53.7	34.2	12.1
1992	57.2	28.9	13.9
1996/1197	34.4	36.3	29.3

Source: Federal Office of Statistics, 1996 and 2001.

Table 3: Poverty by Size of Household

Size of Household	Poverty Headcount			
	1980 %	1995 %	1992 %	1996/199 %
1	0.2	0.7	2.9	13.1
2-4	8.8	19.3	19.5	51.5
5-9	30.0	50.5	45.4	74.8
10-20	51.0	71.3	66.1	88.5
20+	80.9	74.9	93.3	93.6
All Nigeria	27.2	46.3	42.7	65.6

Source: Federal Office of Statistic (2001) Poverty Profile for Nigeria 1980-1997

Definition of a Poor Person

A poor person is considered as one without job, who cannot help himself or cater for his family, who has no money, farm or business. Adolescent males and females are poor if they have no parents, no education, no good food, clothes and health. A poor person is described as one who is undernourished and ageing fast, one without self confidence, looks dirty and lives in filthy environment, one who cannot cater for his family, train his children in the school and unable to pay medical bills (The World Bank, 1992).

Causes and Effects of Corruption on Poverty in Nigeria

Poverty became widespread after the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in Nigeria. When Babangida seized the government from Buhari, the former agreed to implement the International Monetary Fund IMF conditionalities because poverty had become glaring in Nigeria most especially among the rural dwellers. It is on record that Babangida wasted more than 100 Billion Naira in phantom projects. These projects included the one initiated by his wife, Better Life Programmes for the poor, DFRRI, People's Bank of Nigeria, two democratic transition experiments and other big time corruption in which members of the Babangida regime enriched themselves.

People's Bank was copied from Grameen Bank in Bangladesh. When it was established, people praised the government, hoping that the bank would work by easing the plight of the Nigerian poor. This optimism was premised on the knowledge that the idea had been tried and tested somewhere in the world and worked but what Nigerians saw was a huge disappointment. The major reason for the failure was corruption and another major problem of Nigerians which is the lacklustre attitude to the execution of government projects/programme.

Abacha created the Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) and he put another deposed head of State as the Chief Executive, he was asked to apply the available fund to alleviate Nigerians' poverty. At the end of the PTF reign Nigerian poverty and underdevelopment level remained the same, if not worse, as prior to the establishment of the PTF. Dr. Haroun Adamu's interim report on the activities of PTF says that N135 billion out of the N146 billion was squandered, possibly through over invoicing, over supplies, supplying expired materials, wrong project priorities, settling perceived trouble spots, like the army and the police, and blatant thievery.

III. The Social, Political, Environmental, Technological and Social Context of Poverty Alleviation: Requirement for Credible Poverty Alleviation Programme

Poverty can be reduced drastically if the prevailing social and political conditions are conducive for foreign investments. Inflow of foreign investments cannot materialise in an environment of political and economic instability. According to Maduagwu (2000), officially, Nigeria is politically an unstable country. As the Guardian puts it – “from the far north where forces campaigning for Sharia seem to have majority of the governors in agreement, the south-east where the outlawed Biafra currency has become a medium of exchange and where Movement for Actualisation of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) holds sway, to the South-West where the Odua Peoples Congress (OPC) had been championing a violent form of ethnic nationalism, right down to the Niger-Delta area where the youths are in a virtual state of rebellion restlessness and promising hell fire to oil prospecting companies. The trend has been to pull away, not pull together. What all these amount to is that resources from the investors are not safe, according to an adage “money is coward, it does not go where it is not safe” (Maduagwu, 2000).

On the economic front the successive governments have not made clear their economic policy. While Buhari had counter-trading (trade-by-barter), Babangida had his structural Adjustment Programme and Abacha was having a different economic policy every year till his death. The point here is not whether these policies worked or not. Nigerians know that they all failed badly, either because the policies were not implemented in good faith by the Nigerian leaders or that the economic policies were not suitable for Nigeria.

Obasanjo at this moment in time does not have a clear cut economic policy for the Nigerian economy. As at now, all that the government has as economic policies are poverty alleviation, corruption eradication and loot recovery. The poverty alleviation as it is known is provision of money to the states and the local governments so as to be able to employ the unemployed. What happens when the allocation from the Federal Government dries up or late in coming, like it is usually the case, retrenchment surfaces again and the situation is back to square one.

The bulk of the resources Nigeria depends upon come from Niger-Delta region and the instability in the region is probably the most crucial concern for the country's survival. This region is where the Nigeria's camp is based, where the country's foreign exchange is earned, where the fund for the poverty alleviation programme is derived and yet, the area has the highest form of marginalisation. The Niger-Delta region is the breadwinner for Nigeria, it is therefore imperative that the region be well fed if everybody in the country is to expect continuous food from the region. Nigeria may never be at peace as long as their interest is not well catered for.

IV. Institutional Framework for Tackling Poverty

The 1999 World Bank report prompted the government to review the existing poverty alleviation schemes with a view to harmonising them and improving on them. Three presidential panels were set up in this regard. They are the Presidential Panel on the Rationalisation and Harmonisation of Poverty Alleviation and Agencies, headed by Presidential Technical Committee on the Review of all Poverty Alleviation Programmes headed by Professor Ango Abdullahi; and Committee on Youth Policy, Concept of the Youth Empowerment Scheme and the Blueprint for Poverty Eradication Programme.

The findings and recommendations of these presidential panels were combined to form the National Poverty Alleviation Programme (NAPEP) in January 2001. This new scheme has been structured to integrate four sectoral schemes.

The first is the Youth Empowerment Schemes (YES), which is concerned with providing unemployed youth opportunities in skills acquisition, employment and wealth generation. To achieve this, the scheme was further subdivided into Capacity Acquisition Programme, Mandatory Attachment Programme and Credit Delivery Programme.

The second is the Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS). The objective of this scheme is to ensure that the provision and development of infrastructure needs in the areas of transport, energy water and communication especially in rural areas. The scheme was broken into four parts: the Rural Transport Programme, the Rural Energy Programme, the Rural Water Programme and the Rural Communication Programme.

The third is the Social Welfare Services Scheme (SOWESS) which aims at ensuring the provision of basic social services including quality primary and special education, strengthening the economic power of farmers, providing primary health care, and so on. This third scheme consists of four broad sub-categories, which are, the Qualitative Education Programme, Primary Health Care Programme, Farmers Empowerment Programme and Social Services Programme.

The last is the Natural Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS). The vision of this scheme is to bring about a participatory and sustainable development of agricultural, mineral and water resources through the following sub-divisions: Agricultural Resources Programme, Water Resources Programme, Solid Minerals Resources Programme and Environment Protection Programme.

The target of the National Poverty Eradication Programme is to completely wipe out poverty from Nigeria by the year 2010. Three stages to the attainment of this ambitious target have been identified as:

- The restoration of hope in the mass of poor people in Nigeria. This involves providing basic necessities to hitherto neglected people particularly in the rural areas;
- The restoration of economic independence and confidence; and
- The wealth creation.

However, the poor people of this country face a paradox of having so many alleviating programmes to lessen the effect of poverty that is ravaging them and at the same time having to cope with incessant increase in prices of petroleum products which the same government that claims to be fighting poverty is foisting on them through Petroleum Products Pricing and Regulatory Agency (PPPRA). The incessant increase has worsened the purchasing power of the masses because, the multiplier effect of increase in petroleum products has aggravated the inflation rate to the extent that many people in the recent times have become scavengers. Since the advent of this government on 29th May 1999, which has so many committees saddled with responsibility to fight poverty, it is well documented that petroleum product prices had been reviewed upward for about ten times (Punch pp 1-2). The table below shows how the government had impoverished the people through incessant fuel increases.

Date	Price Per Litre	Regime	Increase
Jan. 1, 1999	42 Kobo for Commercial vehicles and 60 Kobo for Private vehicles	Gen. Ibrahim Babangida	43.0%
Dec. 19, 1989	60 Kobo for all	Gen. Ibrahim Babangida	43.0%
March 6, 1991	70 Kobo	Gen. Ibrahim Babangida	16.6%
Nov. 8, 1993	N5.00	Chief Ernest Shonekan	614.0%
Nov. 22, 1993	N3.25	Gen. Sani Abacha	
October 2, 1994	N15.00	Gen. Sani Abacha	361.5%
October 4, 1994	N11.00	Gen. Sani Abacha	
Dec. 0, 1998	N25.00	Gen. A Abubakar	127.0%
January 6, 1999	N20.00	Gen. A Abubakar	
June 1, 2000	N30.00	Chief Olusegun Obasanjo	50%
June 8, 2000	N25.00	Chief Olusegun Obasanjo	
June 13, 000	N22.00	Chief Olusegun Obasanjo	
January 1, 2002	N26.00	Chief Olusegun Obasanjo	18.2%
June 20, 2003	N40.00	Chief Olusegun Obasanjo	53.0%
July 9, 2003	N34.00	Chief Olusegun Obasanjo	
October 1, 2003	N38.50 & N42	Chief Olusegun Obasanjo	
May 29, 2004	N49.90	Chief Olusegun Obasanjo	
January 2005	N50.50	Chief Olusegun Obasanjo	
August 2005	N65	Chief Olusegun Obasanjo	

Source: Petrol increase in Nigeria: The truth you must know. A book written by Gani Fawehinmi

Organisational Structure

In order to ensure an effective implementation of the scheme's objectives, an organisational structure was outlined. The National Poverty Eradication Council (NAPEC) is the apex organ for policy formulation, coordination, monitoring and review of all poverty eradication activities in the country.

President Obasanjo is the chairman of the organ while Vice-President Atiku Abubakar is the vice chairman. The Secretary to the Government of the Federation is the secretary of the organ, while 13 ministers whose ministries are involved in poverty alleviation activities are members.

The participating ministries in the scheme are those of agriculture and rural development, education, works and housing, women affairs and youth development, industry, science and technology, solid minerals development, water resources, health, power and steel, employment labour and productivity, environment and finance. The Chief Economic Adviser to the President and the National Coordinator of NAPEP are also members of the council.

The second most important organ in the structure of NAPEP is the National Assessment and Evaluation Committee. This committee, which serves as a forum for regular monitoring of the activities of NAPEP is chaired by the Vice-President, and draws membership from representatives of the Economic Policy Coordination Committee (EPCC), the National Economic Intelligence Committee (NEIC) the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS), the National Planning Commission, Non Governmental Organisations, the World Bank (Nigeria), the United Nations Development Programme (Nigeria) and the European Union (Nigeria). The National Planning Commission is the secretariat of the council.

The third organ is the National Coordination Committee, which is chaired by the Federal Coordinator of Programmes, is saddled with the task of executing the directives of the National Poverty Eradication Council and ensuring that activities of ministries and agencies involved in the poverty alleviation programme are coordinated. The committee also reports to the council, updates on poverty alleviation efforts in the country. Members of this committee are drawn from representatives of the ministries, parastatals and agencies participating in NAPEP who should not be below the rank of director, President of the Nigerian Guild of Editors, President of the Nigerian Labour Congress, President of the Manufacturers' Association of Nigeria. Others are the President of the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA), President of the National Association of Small Scale Industries, President of the Nigerian Employers' Consultative Association (NECA), representatives of registered political parties and the permanent secretary of the National Poverty Alleviation Programme who will serve as the secretary of the committee.

There are also state coordination committees in all the 36 states in Nigeria, including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The state coordinating committees have chairmen appointed by the president. Similarly, local government monitoring committees have been established in all the 774 local government areas in the country. The National Poverty Eradication Programme is not under any ministry, parastatal or agency, but these bodies are the major executors of its programmes. NAPEP in turn, also periodically executes what is called intervention projects to complement the efforts of ministries and agencies that are involved in poverty alleviation initiatives.

Funding of Nigeria Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)

The Poverty Eradication Fund (PEF) which is administered by the National Poverty Eradication Council (NAPEC) directly funds the National Poverty Eradication Programme. However, all poverty alleviation programmes originally budgeted for by participating ministries will continue to be funded from those budgetary provisions under the supervision of NAPEC. NAPEP is also funded from contributions given to it by state and local governments, the private sector and special deductions from the Consolidated Fund of the Federal Government. It also gets donations from international donor agencies such as the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, the European Union, the Department for International Development, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, and the German Technical Assistance.

When NAPEP came on stream in January 2001, it was given a take-off grant of N6 billion (\$42.8m). This money was used to establish NAPEP structures in 36 states, the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja and 774 local government councils. Part of the money was also used in the NAPEP employment generation intervention which translated to the training of 100,000 youths, attaching 50,000 unemployed graduates in various places of work, training of over 5000 people in tailoring and fashion design, and the establishment of rural telephone networks in 125 local government areas. Other uses to which the money was utilized include of the delivery of the KEKE-NAPEP a three-wheeler vehicle project involving 2000 units in all the state capitals of Nigeria, the establishment of 147 youth information centres across the senatorial districts, the delivery of informal micro credit ranging from N10,000 (\$71) to N50,000 to 10,000 beneficiaries most of whom were women, and so on.

NAPEP Interventions in Poverty Alleviation

From January 2001, NAPEP has intervened in a number of projects. So far, about 140,000 youths have been trained in more than 190 practical hand-on trades over a period of three months. Every trainee in this intervention project was paid N3,000 (\$21) per month while N3,500 (\$215) was paid to each of the trainer. The training programme was packaged with the understanding that beneficiaries would subsequently set up their own businesses in line with the skills they have acquired. To actualise this, 5,000 beneficiaries were resettled with assorted tailoring and fashion designing equipment.

Also under the Mandatory Attachment Programme for unemployment graduates, 40,000 beneficiaries were attached in 2001, each of whom was paid a monthly stipend of N10,000 (\$71). The installation of equipment under the Rural Telephone Project is currently in progress, while the KEKE-NAPEP project is currently being vigorously implemented. The project offers:

- A vehicle with a powerful diesel engine, and a fuel tank capacity of 10.5 litres
- A vehicle with a passenger capacity of four people
- A vehicle with a payload capacity of 320kg
- A vehicle with adequate room for passenger luggage
- A vehicle whose maximum speed is up to 80 km per hour
- A vehicle that is suitable for intracity commuting and commercial passenger carriage; and
- A vehicle that has a low fuel consumption of 38km per litre

The Role of Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) in Poverty Alleviation

Poverty is concerned with the absolute standard of living of the poor. It is the inability to attain a minimal standard of living (World Development Indicators, 1990:26) poverty which could be structural or transitional, whatever the category, poverty is measured by low income, is found to be at its worst in rural areas. Besides, malnutrition, lack of education, low life expectancy and substandard housing are also more severe in rural areas (World Development Indicators, 1990:29). In an attempt to alleviate this problem, three actors are identified in the literature as being involved in any given country namely government, bilateral or multilateral international organisations, and non-governmental organisations.

First, at the government level, poverty can be alleviated by directing public expenditure to the most vulnerable groups in the population. However, within the contemporary market philosophy of SAP in Nigeria, not only is obtaining basic necessities of life increasingly becoming a subject of individual economic power, there is a search for ways to make optimal use of the very scarce government resources. Large public sector deficits also make it necessary to reduce government social services or impose fees on them. The reduction has affected the access of the poor to these services, creating a critical and declining standard of living (Adebayo 1997).

Second, the bilateral or multilateral international organizations, especially the World Bank have immensely contributed to poverty alleviation in human resources development, through renewed investment and policy changes in education and health services, and to alleviate the conditions of the

poorest groups of the population, through targeted nutrition and employment programmes. This effort not withstanding, the bank assistance meets only a small fraction of the needs of the poorest as the country's need are immense and less than 10 per cent of the most vulnerable group are being reached by assistance programmes.

Third are the NGOs, which operate under different names and different guises in both developed and developing countries. These organizations, according to Ryelandt (1995) in Adebayo (1997) help in two main ways; by mobilizing resources beyond the state budget and helping the government's programmes along with their own. Also, they have the exceptional advantage of being close to the target populations and are able to respond flexibly to needs as they arise. When the assistance provided by private, and non-profit groups is considered, one may safely assume that their contribution is indispensable to poverty alleviation. Masoni (1985:39) is of the opinion that the presence of NGOs within the local community and their special commitment to the betterment of the lives of vulnerable group make them the only practicable link between large-scale investments and the farmers or the city dwellers to whom the investments are directed. He added that the target groups must be reached in ways that can be connected with their lives and work. In relative term, he stated that the sensitivity of NGOs to such concerns and their local knowledge and operations cannot usually be matched by government departments. Therefore, the NGOs have enjoyed considerable success over the last three decades; and are now universally accepted as having an effective role to play in poverty alleviation.

On the various reasons for the proliferation of NGOs within the last 10 years, Ba (1995:69) highlights two reasons: a sense of solidarity with rural dwellers, who are becoming increasingly poverty-stricken; and the intention to be a source of job-creation for the unemployed. Gregoire (1995) argues that the key point about the NGOs is their diversity. He observes that the general public has faith in these NGOs and supports them more than they do government agencies.

Granted that the NGO approach to poverty differs from that of government agencies or international institutions, Masoni (1985:40) is of the opinion that to achieve maximum poverty alleviation through government and NGOs approaches, the public sector should provide a policy and financial environment that fosters the activities of NGOs which support official development programmes.

Macro-view of the Nigerian NGOs

Non-government organizations are present in almost all societies of the world and are of a wide variety, ranging from credit unions involved in collective saving pools allotted in turn to members according to their saving share, to village volunteer groups engaged in common tasks such as seasonal agricultural work.

In Nigeria, the establishment of NGOs dates back to the period before 1940. As reflected in Table 4, not less than 20 NGOs were established in the pre-independence period. In the post-independence and across the economic boom periods, 41 other NGOs came on stream. This brought the number to 61. Perhaps as a recognition of the NGOs as essential players in the socio-economic reconstruction of Nigeria, 163 new NGOs were registered during the period of serious economic recession and adjustment. UNICEF records show about 224 NGOs classified by period of establishment in Nigeria.

Table 4: Number of NGOs in Nigeria by Year of Establishment

Year Establishment	Number	Sub-totals
<1940	7	-----
1940–1949	3	-----
1950–1959	10	-----
Pre-independence period: Total	-----	20
1960–1979	18	-----
1970–1979	23	-----
Post-Independence era/economic boom: Total	-----	41
1980–1989	90	-----
1990–1995	73	-----
Economic recession and adjustment period	-----	163
Total Number	224	224

Source: NGO Directory, UNICEF Lagos, 1995.

The NGOs in Nigeria could be divided into two broad categories: philanthropic and self-help. The philanthropic NGOs are secular or religious organizations which focus on humanitarian programmes which cut across many sectors of the economy. Examples of this type are the Lions Club, Rotary Club, The Red Cross, etc. The self-help NGOs focus on economic programmes or self-help objectives among members. They usually operate in the form of professional groups or act as co-operatives to enhance members' productivity and economic progress (Masoni, 1985).

The two categories can be further divided into groups or types. This is attempted in Table 4, with some approximation and overlapping. Of importance to this study is the fact that of the 10 major groups identified, the number of NGOs in development related activities is highest. This is in spite of the fact that a majority of NGOs in other groups are also concerned with development issue, especially the international NGOs and charitable organizations. This focus on development is a reflection of a strong awareness of the contemporary issue of poverty alleviation, especially as macroeconomic policies in Nigeria appear to have done little in that direction.

Table 5: Number of NGOs by Types

NGO Types	Number
Socio-cultural	7
Research	8
Professional association	19
Network	16
International	10
Advocacy	31
Development	48
Charitable	45
Branches of IVD	20

Source: NGO Directory, UNICEF, Lagos

A good number of NGOs in Nigeria focus on the problem of the declining state of agricultural production, unsustainable farming practices and poverty. For instance, Imo Self-Help Organisation (ISHO), Nsukka United Self-Help Organisation (NUSHO), Committee for Women in Development – Nigeria (COWAD), Lift Above Poverty Organization (LAPCO), Development Exchange Centre, Kakame, Bauchi (DEC), Country Women Association of Nigeria (COWAN), Alternative Development (Alter Dev), Women Farmers Association of Nigeria (WOFAN), and Farmers Development Union (FADU) focus mainly on poverty alleviating activities among the rural poor all over Nigeria. Specifically, they promote community-based agricultural projects (Adedjoja, 1996:3).

V. Summary and Conclusion

That poverty exists in Nigeria is not an exaggeration. It is also a fact that the country harbours most of the poor people in the world. There are abundant data such as Nigeria's Human Development Index (HDI) World Development Indicators and the involvement of three major actors to fight it namely, governments, bilateral or multilateral international organisations and non-governmental organisations.

This high level of poverty is in spite of abundant human and natural resources which God had endowed this country. What is found is the poor management of these resources because of bad government, corruption and huge external debt. The country's external debt is put at 32 billion dollars, although it was read in the pages of National Dailies that sixty percent of this debt had been forgiven but this cheering news is yet to translate to economic gains to Nigerian people.

Successive governments in the country had embarked on one alleviating programme or the other but it is on record that all had been abysmal failure. The most scandalous of this failure is the Dr. Haroun Adamu's interim report on the activities of Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) which says N135 billion (\$964m) out of the N146 billion (\$1042m) was squandered.

Like her predecessors, the current government had embarked on several programmes also on attempt to alleviate poverty. The government who is already on the last lap of tenure cannot however claim any tangible achievement in this direction. Poverty even seems to have been compounded as a result of incessant price like of petroleum products. The degree of corruption had not changed either except that it has become more spread across the nation.

However, it is a good thing that government had embarked on programmes that would alleviate the sufferings of the masses. There is a need to remove all the impediments that would create a cog in the wheel of the success of the programmes. Some of the problems include corruption, ethnic clashes, secession ambition, electoral malpractices among other vices that are agents of poverty in the country.

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