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Theme: The Role of Public Service in Poverty Reduction Strategies: Challenges and Solutions

A Country Paper from Nigeria

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ROLE OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE IN POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGIES: CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

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BACKGROUND

Poverty in the World

Poverty is currently one of the most serious problems in the World. Recent estimates indicate that about 1.5 billion people live below the poverty line based on an estimated income of less than one dollar per day globally. Of this quantum, Sub-Saharan Africa contributes about 250 million, which is about 17% of the world’s total poor population. Available and self-explanatory data, shown in Tables 1, 2 and 3, clearly indicate the extent of poverty in the world, and particularly in Africa.

The eradication of absolute poverty is one of the central objectives of contemporary development policy. The International Community’s determination to overcome poverty has been highlighted by the sustainable activities of the International Development Donor Partners such as the United Nations, the DFID, The European Union, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund etc. The eradication of absolute poverty is also the overriding goal of all Governments in Africa most particularly the democratic administration of Nigeria.

This presentation focuses on the poverty situation and its eradication strategies in Nigeria, with emphasis on the roles of the Public Servant in the implementation of the strategies, Schemes, Programmes and Projects.

INTRODUCTION.

Poverty has remained a problem in Nigeria since independence. Successive governments have tried varied efforts to address it with a view to reducing, alleviating and/or eradicating it. Today, after over 40 years of independence, this “demeaning” life style has not only remained prevalent among the people, but also is believed to be intensifying.

A. Poverty in the Nigeria context

Poverty may mean a lot of things, but in the traditional context, it literally refers to an un-acceptable situation of living. For simplicity, poverty can really be referred to in the absolute or relative terms. The poverty generally addressed by the Government of Nigeria is the absolute poverty. Such poverty is translated in terms of the absence or lack of basic amenities of life including:

i. having not enough to eat,
ii. poor drinking water,
iii. poor nutrition,
iv. unfit housing,
v. a high rate of infant mortality,
vi. low life expectancy,

vii. low educational opportunities,

viii. inadequate health care,

ix. lack of productive assets,
x. lack of economic infrastructure

xi. inability to actively participate in decision making processes;

xii. etc.

The consequences of this phenomenon of poverty include, but are not limited to:

i. state of powerlessness;

ii. helplessness;

iii. despair, and thus the inability to protect oneself against economic, social, cultural and political discrimination and marginalisation;

iv. Deprivation and lack of rights;

v. defenselessness and insecurity, vulnerability and exposure to risks, shocks and stress.

The predicament may further lead to desperation which in turn produces violence, high rate of robbery, theft, thuggery and other deviant human behavioral tendencies.

Before we check on the eradication activities and by implication, the role of the public servant, let us very briefly reflect on the Nigerian situation and statistics.

Nigeria is the most populous black nation in the World, with a projected population of nearly 120 million people. Statistical data from the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) indicate that by 1960 poverty covered about 15% of the population of Nigeria and by 1980 it grew to 28%. By 1985 the extent of poverty was about 46% and then dropped to 43% by 1992. By 1996, poverty incidence in Nigeria was estimated to be about 66%.

According to the United Nations Reports (1999), Nigeria’s Human Poverty Index (HPI) was only 41.6%, which placed the country among the 25 poorest nations in the world. The HPI for some other African Countries are shown in table 3 in which Zimbabwe, Botswana, Kenya, Burkina Faso and Niger had 17.3%, 22.9%, 26.1%, 58.3% and 66.0% respectively.

Additional data from the FOS (1999) further indicated that life expectancy for Nigeria was 51 years; literacy rate was 56% and 70% of the rural population did not have access to potable water, healthcare facilities and electricity. The adult
literacy rate for Zaire, Zambia and Zimbabwe were 76%, 77% and 85% respectively. Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births) and under-five mortality rates for Nigeria were 82 and 191 respectively by 1995. The same data for South Africa, Cameroon and Zimbabwe were 51 and 67; 62 and 106; 70 and 74 respectively.

Based on the data also from the FOS, the state-by-state poverty incidence in Nigeria for selected years between 1980 and 1996 is shown in Table 4. The data clearly indicate high and varying poverty levels among the states of the Federation. The data further show that poverty in Nigeria increased sharply both between 1980 and 1985 and between 1992 and 1996. Furthermore, by 1992 only 10 states had more than half of their population in poverty, but by 1996 all states except Bayelsa had more than half of their population in poverty.

Demographically, 70% of the Nigerian population lives in the rural areas, most of who are engaged in subsistence farming. The Country is structured into 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), (Annex I). The States and FCT are further subdivided into 774 Local Government Areas (LGAs) within which are a total of over 8,000 Wards.

On the other hand, Nigeria is relatively prosperous being naturally endowed with wide and varied Agricultural, Mineral, Fossil and Human resources. These can technically be translated into a long list of opportunities for both development and economic prosperity. Despite this convenient structure, and “theoretical” abundance, available data indicate that the estimated national poverty incidence averages about 0.7 (Table 4).

It is no good news. It is simply horrendous. It literally implies that out of every 100 Nigerians, 70 do not have:

Access to potable water, meaning that they are highly susceptible to water borne diseases;

Access to basic education, meaning that from the delicate age of 5, children do not have access to modern learning facilities, that illiteracy and ignorance are increasingly getting worse;

Access to basic health care facilities, meaning that mortality of women and children is dominated by ailments that could be treated by common sense techniques, even eradicable diseases like malaria are claiming human lives at epidemic levels, not to talk of the threats of the recently emerging figures of AIDS infection.

Access to credit facilities meaning that despite the theoretical abundance of agro and mineral resources, such cannot effectively be tapped and developed;
Access to basic infrastructure facilities meaning that they do not effectively have access to information, they are bound by limitations of getting their basic needs and moving their products, they cannot transform their products or add value to them etc:

Access to basic recreational facilities, meaning that even the basic and well-known Nigerian communal lifestyle is slowly diminishing.

In addition to all the above, the production and processing technical base is weak. Technical and skilled manpower is of low grade and where the grade is acceptable, training, retraining and upgrading are lacking. As a result of all these unbelievable "harsh" living conditions, most especially in this millennium of technology and information explosion, governance is increasingly becoming impalpable, remote and imponderable due to the low stake of the ordinary citizen in the day-to-day economic participation and benefits.

This may sound, alarming and unfathomable, especially when juxtaposed with the massive natural and human potentials of the country. But this is the sad reality on the ground. It therefore raises questions as to what had been done in the past as well as current efforts to address poverty in Nigeria. An impassionate analysis of the situation however, suggests that the Nigerian situation in terms of economic and development potentials, particularly in the rural areas must be re-evaluated, with a view to reversing these current negative realities. Without any iota of doubt, given the central role of government in the fight against poverty, the Public Servant is a key participant and stakeholder in the realization of this noble objective.

**B. Poverty and the Nigerian Economy**

The poverty level in Nigeria contradicts the immense resources of the country. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew only by 2.31% in 1998, 2.82% in 1999 and 3.83% in 2000. Furthermore, despite the immense resources, the country has been depending mainly on oil for export. By 1997, the oil and non-oil exports were 97.65% and 2.36% respectively. But by 1998 and 1999, these were 95.47% and 4.53%; and 98.36% and 1.64% respectively.

The detailed statistical information on the Nigerian economy is shown in Tables 5 to 10, which are self-explanatory. The performance of the economy as measured by some selected performance indicators, compiled by the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria is also shown in Table 11.

In general, compared with poverty levels in Nigeria, between 1980 to date, the Nigerian economy cannot be said to have fared well.
CAUSES OF POVERTY IN NIGERIA

There are a number of factors that have contributed to increased poverty in Nigeria over the years. These include:

Macro-economic Distortions
Poor macro-economic and monetary policies resulting in low economic growth rate and continuous slide in the value of the naira, which depreciated from N1.0 to N140.0 to $1.0 between June 1986 to March 2001 in the parallel market. Similarly, other macro economic indicators such as inflation rate, interest rate the GDP growth rate, unemployment and income distribution among others, have continued to show negative trend, which ultimately translated to worsening poverty incidence.

Weak Productive Base
The Nigerian economy had experienced some changes since independence, but as at today, it is still characteristically monolithic, depending on one primary product for over 90 per cent of its exports and Government revenue. Similarly, the productive base is still narrow and weak, despite more than three decades of deliberate efforts at promoting economic growth and development through the preparation and implementation of development plans. At independence, the Nigerian economy was almost entirely based on agriculture with the sector accounting for over 80 per cent of employment, Government revenue and exports. However, crude oil took over since the 1970s while agriculture suffered much neglect. This naturally narrowed down considerably, the employment generation capabilities of the economy, in addition to frittering away the hard earned foreign exchange on importation of food items and other essential commodities. These naturally worsened the poverty situation.

Effects of Globalization
The process of globalization, which started about a decade and a half ago, caught Nigeria in the throes of political instability. The main features of the globalization process include liberalization of trade, free movement of capital and accelerated development in information technology. Globalization provides windows of opportunities if the indices of development (interest and exchange rates, terms of trade, tariffs etc.) are on the positive and favourable scale. In Nigeria however, by the middle of the eighties, public infrastructure and utility had gone into serious dilapidation. The road networks were in bad shape. Schools and hospitals had deteriorated. Telecommunication and power supply became very erratic. As a result of petroleum-related activities, agriculture was
relegated to the background and those that remained in it (i.e. farmers), were operating at subsistence level, characterized by the following:

Collapsing and uncompetitive industrial sector activities (30% surviving in the last 10 years).

Rapid growth in unemployment, underemployment and poverty (about 60% among the youths aged 14 - 25 years) translating into 3 million jobless persons entering the labour market annually.

Social instability and intolerance (ethnic nationalities and religious friction).

Hyperinflation (averaging 50% between 1985 - 1995).

Unstable interest and exchange rates (from $1 = N1.5 in 1985 to $1 to N100 in 1990 to an interest rate of 35% per annum as at September, 2000);

Low productivity; and

Endemic corruption, greed and avarice.

Given Nigeria’s comparative disadvantage in key industrial and economic sectors, globalization presents overwhelming challenges to the country as she lacks what it takes to be relevant or even adapt and/or cope effectively, without exposing her soft socio political and economic underbelly. Until Nigeria achieves certain level of good governance, a revamped industrial base, modest economic growth, fairly efficient public infrastructure and utilities among others, she shall remain at the receiving end of globalization, and by extension, continue to experience ravaging poverty situation.

**Bad Governance**

Bad governance over the years had deprived Nigerians of the ideals and dividends of democracy. It is the objective of the present government of Nigeria to explore and exploit, through the democratic process, the energy and creative talents of the people and harness the nation’s resources to enhance the welfare of the citizenry. This is with a view to creating a dynamic economy and establishing a free, democratic and just society through the pursuit of people centered programmes. The process will facilitate and consistently cultivate a style of governance that places premium on openness, transparency and accountability, probity and effective leadership. These lofty ideals had been denied Nigerians for decades, hence the diminishing standard of living experienced by the citizenry over the years.

**Corruption**
Corruption comes in different forms and differs from country to country. In Africa, illegal take-over of government through military coups, embezzlement, nepotism, looting, bribery, vote buying and abuse of office are very common. For instance, it is common practice for top government jobs to be filled with cronies who serve as conduit pipes to siphon public money to foreign accounts of some top government functionaries. Such monies are often kept in secret accounts in Switzerland and other notable capitals of the developed world. It is no longer news that Nigeria is ranked among the most corrupt countries in the world. While this could be considered subjective, one cannot but acknowledge the existence of corrupt practices in Nigeria, which range from extortion by public functionaries to advance fee fraud. At the National level, there is hardly any form of service that would be rendered without giving or receiving undue favours and/or gratification. Access to public welfare services such as admissions into schools and health treatment has been ridden by corrupt practices. Payments have to be made to the security operators for bails, which are supposed to be free, while ‘guarantee fees’ are demanded from consumers of power and telecommunication services for effective access. Promotion in some workplaces is based on illegal inducement offered by undeserving officers. At the international scene, credit card racket, breach of business trust, false identities are the stock in trade of many Nigerians abroad. The total effect is that corruption has wiped out the goodwill that usually sustains good business relationship and also weakened the basis of patriotism necessary for development.

The manifestation of corruption in Nigeria progressed marginally among individuals and thereafter assumed an institutional and later national dimension. Currently, Corruption is freely practised at corporate/institutional levels. In government, how much an institution/agency gets by way of allocation is determined not by its statutory functions but by patronage. Unfortunately, the agencies involved are central to the nation’s economic activities, such that the harm they inflict on the economy is complex. Foreigners find it difficult to invest in Nigeria because of impediments put in their way by corrupt officials. Cases of “white elephant projects” abound primarily because those executing them were motivated by corruption rather than economic development of the nation. Through corrupt practices, the bulk of the nations’ wealth has been distributed in favour of the few privileged to the detriment of the majority of Nigerians who are now wallowing in abject poverty. All these naturally result in low inflow of foreign investment, massive capital flight and warped reward system, leading to inefficient allocation of scare resources, and ultimate, worsening poverty incidence.

**Debt Burden**
Debt burden has been one of the drawbacks to Nigeria's developmental efforts. The debt portfolio, which was about US$14.28 billion dollars in 1980, had risen to about US$30 billion in the year 2000. The servicing of the debt has encroached on the volume of resources needed for socio-economic development as it is estimated that around 40 per cent of Nigeria's national income goes to debts payments. The high debt service ratio translates into resource constraint needed for such public infrastructure and utilities as:

- Hospitals;
- Schools;
- Roads (Urban and Rural); and
- Power supply and potable water.

Productive sectors of the economy like agriculture, industry, manufacturing etc. are equally constrained leading to low productivity, low capacity utilisation, under employment and low purchasing power, thereby throwing majority of Nigerians into abject poverty.

**Low Productivity**

This refers to the dwindling performance of the manufacturing sector which has the capacity to employ about 20 million people but currently employs only about 1.5 million, despite the fact that the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) has roughly 2,750 registered members. The reasons for this are not far fetched. Successive Governments had failed to embark on policies that ensured the availability and access to cheap capital, land, labour, raw materials, information, infrastructure and technology, and where any efforts were made at all, they were best described as feeble and ineffective.

Productivity which is the ratio of output to the corresponding input of factors of production (labour, land, capital and technology) has over the last one and half decades continued to dwindle in virtually all sectors of the Nigerian economy. It is also clear that low productivity is the genesis of economic stagnation in Nigeria. The long period of military rule with its centralized system of administration further aggravated the problem. The reasons for low productivity and its attendant negative effects on Nigerians are attributable to the following factors among others:

- Economic policies that are not growth oriented;
- Dwindling internal resource base and dearth of foreign capital;
- Political instability, which undermines continuity in development plans and strategies;
- Poor performance measurement and reward system in the public service;
Weak private sector;
Breakdown of family values and societal norms;
Failure to harness internal resources;

Successive Governments had viable options to redress the declining productivity, but lack of political will and self-serving motives among others, made this impossible. These options include:

i. general improvement of the state of infrastructure and utilities;
ii. streamline and professionalise the Nigerian Civil Service;
iii. introduce appropriate standards for performance measurement;
iv. introduce appropriate reward systems;
v. cultivate/encourage professionalism;
vi. encourage private initiatives to invest in public infrastructure development;
vii. enhance maintenance culture of public utilities;
viii. enhance Productivity Awareness Campaign;
ix. allocation of resources to be backed by cost/benefit analysis; and
x. deregulation of workers (Multiple jobs) and Wage System (ability to earn).

Unemployment
Unemployment in Nigeria assumed crisis levels in the late 80s and early 90s especially among primary/secondary school leavers and graduates of tertiary institutions. A survey carried out by the Centre for Investment, Sustainable Development, Management and Environment in 1998 gave the features as follows:

Over 70% of the unemployed are relatively unskilled primary and secondary school leavers between the ages of 13-25 years;

Graduate unemployment, which hitherto was unnoticed, started to emerge in mid 80s most especially through the following:

Nigeria had a total enrolment of about 600,000 students in 149 tertiary institutions in 1996/97 academic year;
There were 123,000 graduates in the 1995/96 session and about 130,000 graduates in 1996/97;
Cumulatively, Nigeria produced a total of 1,110,000 graduates from tertiary institutions; and
About 10% i.e. 100,000 got formal jobs; over one million might be openly unemployed or under-employed.

The Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and Colleges dropouts and retrenchment of workers due to the closure of many industries further worsened the unemployment situation. Although there are no reliable data on unemployment situation presently, it has roughly been estimated to be over 5.0million. All these naturally worsened the high level of poverty recorded by FOS in 1996.

**High Population Growth Rate**
Statistics show that in 1980, Nigeria's population was about 65 million, it rose to 88 million in 1991 and further increased to 102.3 million in 1996. It is estimated that the Nigerian population is currently about 120 million. This increase in population has over-stretched the basic social and infrastructure facilities as well as public goods in the face of dwindling national resources. A situation in which population growth averages 2.83 against GDP growth rate of 2.7% means that resources meant for investment are consumed with little left for development thereby reinforcing the vicious cycle of poverty.

**Poor Human Resources Development**
Traditional/formal education ensures the full development of human personality and citizenship. Initial training develops a person's skills, and professional competence that enables him to perform in employment. This, when complemented with life long experience would ensure continued appreciation and/or adaptation to changes in the global environment. In developing countries, the challenge of human resources training and development should go beyond the need to secure relevance in a modern society to the application of acquired skills for self or paid employment. Thus, through well targeted and integrated human resource training and development, Nigeria can empower the people with relevant skills and improve the pace of economic development. The human resource development shall centre on the following:

i. Providing vocational skills for an array of unemployed school leavers and graduates of tertiary institutions;
   Providing public sector officials with knowledge and techniques to build a strong partnership with stakeholders;
   Building capacity for enhanced monitoring and extension services;
   Institutionalising sustainable credit delivery system;
   Building capacity of national institutions to keep and maintain data on the activities of the economy;
Providing counseling and extension services on “Start your Business”, “Know About Business”; “Improve Your Business” etc. For informal, Micro and Small Enterprises Operators.

Sadly enough, this approach has not really been adopted nor fully explored by successive governments since independence. This has contributed in no small measures to the high incidence of poverty in the country.

POVERTY ERADICATION STRATEGIES
Since 1999 when the current democratic administration came into power, the main agenda has been mainly to try and address the issue of poverty in a decisive and sustainable way. The following are some of the experiences so far:

Streamlining and Rationalization of Poverty Alleviation Institutions and Agencies
The implementation of poverty related programmes is not new in Nigeria. By 1999, there were 18 core Federal Ministries of poverty alleviation and about 30 core Institutions, Agencies and Programmes. There were also Ministries, Agencies and Institutions for poverty alleviation activities for the various State Governments, Local Government Councils, the Community Based Organisations (CBOs) Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the International Donor Agencies (IDAS). But disappointingly, the poverty reduction efforts of these institutions failed to yield any positive results, principally due to the following among others:

i. poor policy formulation and coordination;
ii. policy discontinuity and lack of sustainability;
iii. absence of policy framework, institutional framework and delivery machinery;
iv. absence of target setting for Ministries, Agencies and Programmes;
v. absence of coordination, complementation and monitoring;
vi. absence of effective collaboration and complementation among the three tiers of Government;
vii. duplication of functions among institutions and agencies;
viii. unhealthy rivalries among institutions and agencies;
ix. lack of the involvement of the traditional authorities and community groups in projects selection and implementation;
x. embarking on projects that do not have direct relevance to the poor and in some cases abandonment of these projects; and
xi. absence of an agreed poverty reduction agenda that can be used by all concerned that is the Federal Government, State Governments, Local Governments, and the International Donor Agencies.
The above problems set the agenda for this administration at inception in 1999.

In view of the problems identified above, and particularly in order to:

i. streamline and rationalize the functions of core poverty alleviation institutions and agencies;

ii. reduce overlapping functions;

iii. enhance their effective performance;

iv. improve coordination; and

v. improve collaboration with State Governments, Local Governments and International Donor Agencies,

The Federal Government since January, 2000 had taken the following decisions:

i. A new bank, the Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB) has been formed from the merger of the Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (NACB), People Bank of Nigeria (PBN) and the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP).

ii. A new bank, the National Bank for Industry (NBI), has been formed from the merger of the Nigerian Industrial Development Bank (NIDB), Nigerian Bank for Commerce and Industry (NBCI) and the National Economic and Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND);

iii. The Nigerian Mortgage Finance Ltd has been merged with Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN);

iv. The workscope of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), has been streamlined to exclude credit delivery and to limit it to training for skills acquisition, vocational training and general programmes associated with employment generation;

v. The Nigerian Agricultural Insurance Corporation (NAIC) has been merged with the National Insurance Corporation of Nigeria (NICON);

vi. The National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) is responsible for the provision and coordination of rural health facilities while prevention, control and spread of infections and contagious diseases are part of the responsibilities of the Federal Ministry of Health;

vii. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme has been established and has subsumed the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education (NCMLAE), National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE), and the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC);

viii. The National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA), Federal Agricultural Coordinating Unit (FACU) and the Agricultural Projects Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (APMEU), have been wound up and
their functions transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development;
ix. A new Project Monitoring Unit (PMU) in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has been established but not as a parastatal;
x. The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has been restructured such that the following activities have been transferred to the States and Local Governments:
    tractor hiring
    land clearing and development
    horticulture
    fertiliser distribution
    seeds and seedling preparation and distribution
    agro-forestry
    extension services
    inland fishing and cooperative development.
xi. The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has ceased to coordinate the Agricultural Universities. The coordination has been transferred to the National Universities Commission (NUC);
pii. The Small and Medium Industries Development Agency, SMIDA, has been established to take over the 21 Industrial Development Centres (IDCs), the Rural Agro-Industrial Development Scheme (RAIDS) in Ibadan and the National Centre for Agricultural Mechanisation Institute(NCAM), Ilorin;
pii. The River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAS), though being considered for commercialisation are being restructured;
xiv. The Family Support Trust Fund (FSTF) has wound up;
xv. The Federal Urban Mass Transit Agency (FUMTA) has wound up;
xvi. The National Centre for Women Development, (NCWD) is to be commercialized and has been transferred to the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development;
xvii. Specific targets for all agencies have been set up for the year 2003;
xviii. The National Poverty Eradication Council (NAPEC) for policy formulation, coordination and monitoring has been established; and
xix. Considering the fact that some important issues regarding identification and formulation of relevant poverty alleviation programmes need to be further addressed, as an ad-hoc programme, the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) through improved maintenance culture was approved for implementation in the year 2000.
Although most of these decisions are very positive, it is unfortunate that less than 50 percent have been fully implemented, which by implication, betrayed the inability of the public service to rise up to the challenges of taming the scourge of poverty.

Furthermore, by January 2001, the Federal Government approved the blueprint for establishing the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) as an apex poverty eradication institution in the Country. The NAPEP consists of all relevant Programmes and projects that are aimed at eradicating absolute poverty among the people of Nigeria. The NAPEP is not an employment agency. It is the Secretariat of the National Poverty Eradication Council (NAPEC). Its structure and functions are presented in the next section of this paper.

**Structure and Implementation of the NAPEP**

**The Poverty Eradication Schemes**
The ultimate target of the Federal Government poverty eradication schemes is the eradication of absolute poverty among the people of Nigeria. The eradication of poverty in Nigeria is therefore to ensure that all Nigerians are provided with:

- steady source of real income;
- high purchasing power;
- abundant, good quality and high nutritional food;
- basic health care facilities;
- good quality education;
- good quality drinking water;
- good standard housing units;
- good quality roads and other means of transport;
- stable and affordable power supply;
- good urban and rural communication facilities;
- cheap and affordable consumer products; and
- conducive environment for production and trades.

If all these can be provided to all Nigerians, then the target for eradicating absolute poverty in Nigeria is achieved. It should be realized that, in order to achieve the above successfully, all the three tiers of Government must work together as a team.

The Federal Government’s major executors of these programmes are the Ministries. For a coordinated implementation and monitoring of the programmes
of the core poverty eradication ministries, their activities have been classified into four schemes. These are:

Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) to address issues of employment generation, skill acquisition and improvement, wealth generation and youth development. YES is further sub-divided into the following programmes:
  Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP), mainly to cover training, skill acquisition and capacity building activities necessary to get the primary/secondary school graduates, school drop-outs, and uneducated youths equipped for gainful employment;
  Mandatory Attachment Programme (MAP), mainly to cover all activities necessary to impart skills and re-orient and improve the employability of graduates of tertiary institutions; and
  Credit Delivery Programme (CDP), meant to cover all activities that facilitate access to micro-credit by the skilled unemployed.

Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS) to address issues related to the provision and maintenance of basic but critical infrastructure. RIDS programmes include:
  Rural Transport Programme (RTP),
  Rural Energy Programme (REP),
  Rural Water Programme (RWP),
  Rural Communication Programme (RCP).

Social Welfare Services Schemes (SOWESS) to address the issues related to the provision of needed core social and welfare services under the following programmes:
  Special Education Programme (SEP),
  Primary Healthcare Programme (PHP),
  Farmers Empowerment Programme (FEP),
  Social Services Programme (SSP).

Natural Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS) to address the issues of appropriate tapping of natural resources while maintaining adequate care for the environment. The programmes of NRDCS include:
  Agricultural Resources Programme (ARP),
  Water Resources Programme (WRP),
  Solid Minerals Resources Programme (SMRP), and
  Environmental Protection Programme (EPP).
The details of the implementation strategies for the programmes in each of the above schemes are provided in a separate publication titled "Programmes and Implementation Strategies."

Implementation Structure of the NAPEP
For the effective implementation of these schemes, the following structures have been established:

The National Poverty Eradication Council (NAPEC).
The National Assessment and Evaluation Committee (NAEC).
The National Coordination Committee (NCC).
NAPEC Secretariat.
The State Poverty Eradication Councils (SPECs)
State Coordination Committees (SCC)
Local Government Monitoring Committees (LGMC).

Activities And Achievements Of NAPEP

i. NAPEP Committees and Meetings
ii. NAPEP Meetings with States Permanent Secretaries
iii. Establishment of National, State and Local Government Secretariats of NAPEP
iv. National Secretariat of NAPEP
v. State Secretariats
vi. Local Government Secretariats
vii. 2001 Budget for NAPEP
viii. NAPEP Interventions
ix. Allocations to States
x. Identification of Training Centres
xi. Training of Trainers Programme
xii. Selection of Trades for CAP
xiii. Registration of Participants
xiv. Selection of Participants
xv. Special Training Programmes
xvi. Identification of Attachment Companies for MAP
xvii. Guidelines for Screening and Posting of the Participants of the Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES)
xviii. NAPEP Intervention Under the CDP
xix. Take-Over of PAP 2000
xx. Re-Registration of PAP 2000 Participants
Firstly, this approach has the potential of ensuring:
- An improved and effective performance of Government Ministries and Agencies;
- Better coordination and monitoring of Government Programmes;
- Better complementation of activities between the three tiers of Government; and
- Reduced duplication of activities among the Federal Government Agencies and between those Federal Government Agencies and the other tiers of Government.

Secondly, the unemployment problem in Nigeria seems to be one of the most serious problems currently. The NAPEP has established a registered database for the unemployed in each State of the Federation and FCT. About 2 million unemployed youth have been registered. It is expected that the registration of the unemployed will be a continuous exercise and any programme to reduce or alleviate the problems of the unemployed shall be from the registered data.

Thirdly, a total of 140,000 youths have been attached and trained under CAP in 2001/2002. Similarly, over 40,000 graduates have been attached under MAP. All the attached youth under CAP were trained for Specific Skill acquisition, after which they shall all be resettled appropriately.

Fourthly, the credit delivery programmes of NAPEP that are progressively being extended include:
- KEKE-NAPEP project;
- Credit to Women through the National Council of Women Societies (NCWS);
- Delivery of cash credit to the informal sector;
- Delivery of tailoring and fashion design equipment to trainees of CAP;
- Extension of some Information Technology equipment for the establishment of Youth Information Centres nationwide;
- Establishment of Skill Development Centres in collaboration with the UNDP;
- Etc.

Current Status And The Way Forward
No doubt, the latest strategies adopted by the current civilian administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo to arrest the ravaging phenomenon of poverty represent the right step in the right direction. A cursory appraisal of the
political, economic and social situation of the country suggests that some progress has been achieved, albeit marginally, and the stage is now set for a meaningful consolidation of the gains recorded so far, towards improving the living standards of all citizens.

One veritable way of achieving this is through the instrumentality of Federal Ministries and their Agencies who are the major service providing structures of Government in Nigeria, through the varied projects and programmes they implement year in year out. Between 1999 and 2002 alone, the Federal Government has invested over ₦1.0 Trillion through the Federal Ministries (Annex II) to deliver projects and programmes meant to improve the living standards of Nigerians. However, tracing through the traditional process of projects delivery, from planning, proposal articulation, budgeting, approval/financing, field execution, documentation, and reporting, the existing practices within the Federal Ministries must be revisited if the needed efficiency and effectiveness are to be improved and the basic objective of poverty eradication eventually achieved. Towards this therefore, the following strategies could be useful:

The Cabinet Secretariat in the office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), should firmly maintain a database of all Government policy decisions on all sectors as it affects all Ministries, which should be made accessible by all Ministries;

In addition to the weekly FEC meetings with only Ministers, a special FEC session be introduced to be held once in every month where Permanent Secretaries in the Ministries would present the details of stages and levels of policy decision implementation to the members of the FEC;

All main line Ministries should institutionalize a functional in-house regularly updated database or Website on details of all projects being implemented, which shall be accessible by all other Ministries and Agencies of Government;

The meetings of the Committee of Head of Civil Service with all Permanent Secretaries should introduce sessions where Permanent Secretaries would present technical and quantitative reports on the progress of projects being handled by their respective Ministries;

Within each sector and Ministry, there is the need to ensure that government’s short, medium and long-term plans and targets are clearly set and followed as budgets get approved and projects get implemented and tracked;

**CONCLUSIONS**

Currently, most Government’s efforts aimed at improving the living standards of citizens of Nigeria rest with the Federal Ministries. This, coupled with the evident low pace of development indicates the grave need for the Federal Ministries and Agencies to improve their efficiency and effectiveness.
Some practicable strategies needed to ensure that Government Policies are timely implemented and closely monitored, with all project information being recorded, processed, stored, documented and shared, have been suggested above, with a view to improving the effectiveness of Ministries and maximizing development impacts on Nigerians. If considered and implemented, then, the fight against poverty in Nigeria would have received the needed impetus and the decisive blow would have been dealt the scourge.
## Annex II

### ACTUAL EXPENDITURE OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO MINISTRIES AND PARASTATALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MINISTRY/PARASTATAL</th>
<th>1999 Nb</th>
<th>2000 Nb</th>
<th>2001 Nb</th>
<th>2002 Nb</th>
<th>TOTAL Nb</th>
<th>% OF TOT EXPENDITURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power and Steel</td>
<td>6.698</td>
<td>49.785</td>
<td>70.927</td>
<td>26.065</td>
<td>153.475</td>
<td>24.605%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works and Housing</td>
<td>8.498</td>
<td>29.234</td>
<td>52.367</td>
<td>44.279</td>
<td>134.378</td>
<td>21.543%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Resources</td>
<td>1.512</td>
<td>19.496</td>
<td>34.248</td>
<td>18.020</td>
<td>73.276</td>
<td>11.747%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>6.240</td>
<td>29.541</td>
<td>22.556</td>
<td>0.814</td>
<td>59.151</td>
<td>9.483%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>2.740</td>
<td>41.595</td>
<td>1.972</td>
<td>1.999</td>
<td>48.306</td>
<td>7.744%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>2.750</td>
<td>7.583</td>
<td>16.466</td>
<td>5.625</td>
<td>32.424</td>
<td>5.198%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture &amp; Rural Development</td>
<td>3.605</td>
<td>10.441</td>
<td>11.331</td>
<td>2.080</td>
<td>27.457</td>
<td>4.402%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports &amp; Social Development</td>
<td>0.895</td>
<td>0.688</td>
<td>13.074</td>
<td>10.256</td>
<td>24.913</td>
<td>3.994%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>2.146</td>
<td>5.142</td>
<td>10.068</td>
<td>3.407</td>
<td>20.763</td>
<td>3.329%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) / National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>10.000</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>2.000</td>
<td>17.000</td>
<td>2.725%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Planning Commission</td>
<td>1.017</td>
<td>0.166</td>
<td>0.436</td>
<td>9.091</td>
<td>10.710</td>
<td>1.717%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science &amp; Technology</td>
<td>0.119</td>
<td>0.920</td>
<td>1.284</td>
<td>4.435</td>
<td>6.758</td>
<td>1.083%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solid Minerals Development</td>
<td>0.709</td>
<td>0.330</td>
<td>1.169</td>
<td>2.339</td>
<td>4.547</td>
<td>0.729%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture &amp; Tourism</td>
<td>1.133</td>
<td>0.447</td>
<td>1.788</td>
<td>0.981</td>
<td>4.349</td>
<td>0.697%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>0.680</td>
<td>0.128</td>
<td>1.135</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>1.953</td>
<td>0.313%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour and Productivity</td>
<td>0.569</td>
<td>0.740</td>
<td>0.239</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>1.548</td>
<td>0.248%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>0.338</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>1.068</td>
<td>1.510</td>
<td>0.242%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL BUDGETTED AND RELEASED</strong></td>
<td>39.649</td>
<td>207.210</td>
<td>244.440</td>
<td>132.469</td>
<td>623.768</td>
<td>100.000%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL ACTUAL FISCAL EXPENDITURE</strong>*</td>
<td>109.685</td>
<td>249.049</td>
<td>413.352</td>
<td>249.782</td>
<td>1,021.868</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Office of the Accountant-General of the Federation (Federal Ministry of Finance)

Note * includes expenditure by other Ministries and Parastatals not listed