





## **Poverty and Under-Development in Nigeria**

**V. O. Aghayere and Walter Idada**

*Institute for Governance and Development, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma,  
Nigeria*

*Department of Public Administration, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma,  
Nigeria*

*Email: Walteridada@Yahoo.Co.Uk*

### **ABSTRACT**

This paper looks at poverty and under-development in the Olusegun Obasanjo first democratic years in Nigeria. It sees poverty as a condition where an individual or organization experiences a situation of lack, a situation with little or no resource to acquire the basic necessities of life. It goes further to look at the concept of under-development and submits that it is a social, economic, political and technological phenomenon that describes a society, in a primitive, crude, low, unrefined, and savage state. It describes that which is industrially and infrastructural barren. A careful identification and analysis of the overwhelming evidence of poverty and under-development in Nigeria, their causes, effects, and the feeble attempts made by various governments severally to curb the menace is done. The writers conclude by proffering some recommendations that can be adopted to turn the situation around.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Nigerian poverty and abysmal development scenario is a pathetic case. Like the Siamese twins, poverty and underdevelopment tangle together, the latter creating an enabling environment for the former. Poverty, as it were, is not only the exclusive preserve of a large section of the Nigerian society but a multidimensional and hydro – headed national malaise that permeates all facts of lives and activities of Nigerians. From North to South, East to West, the people are in shackles and are ravaged by hunger, unemployment, destructive epileptic electricity supply where they are available, infected drinking water in the midst of abundance, untarred roads, deadly pot-holes, uncleared drainage system, irregular educational system, innate corrupt public service, ghost hospitals, diseases, insecurity and recently unguarded faceless and inhuman deregulation policies of the federal government. It is no wonder then Nigerian placed 152<sup>nd</sup> among the world 175 nations in human development as revealed by the United Nations Development Programme

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(UNDP). It is a painful and satanic vicious circle of poverty. For Forukanmi, (October 3, 2003:41),

*...the stench of poverty...is visible on the faces of Nigerians, in the nature of our living conditions, in the decaying morphology of our towns which are over congested and ragged, on the roads which are prone to erosion, untarred (with) imported junks referred to as motor vehicles...dearth of drugs in our clinics, ...collapse of tertiary education, ...dearth of employment opportunities for able bodies and educated youths most of whom are, for want of gainful employment involved in armed robbery and in other unwholesome activities.*

In an amusing twist and irony, Nigeria, in a research conducted by a United Kingdom magazine, *New Scientist*, in 1999 – 2001, was identified as the country with the happiest people on earth.

It is, perhaps, the complacent, docile, conservative and unrevolutionary traits that hardly and significantly question unpopular governmental actions and upturn official status quo that can largely be said to be responsible for this psychological state of Nigerians. The “Sidon look attitude” popularized by the sage, Ajibola Ige, the late Chief Justice of Nigeria, which can easily be misconstrued as happiness among the people helps to explain this state further. In this circumstance, a proper conceptualization of poverty and development becomes very import.

### **CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL COONSIDERATION**

**Poverty-** The concept, poverty with all modesty, no matter from what perspective it is considered has one universal condition and factor incontrovertible and immutable. The dominance and prevalence of the deprivation of a necessity creates a nagging vacuum and emptiness in ones life. The wide gulf between ones desire and needs and the inability, to translate the latter into economic demand often create this nagging vacuum and feeling of hopelessness, anxiety, frustration, and apathy. In this light, poverty becomes a condition when an individual or organization experiences a situation of lack, a situation with little or no resources to acquire the basic necessities and needs of life.

**Poverty Line And Poverty Trap-** Other concepts such as poverty line and poverty trap have, been introduced to enhance our understanding of poverty. The recognition of the basic needs and necessities in life and the need to empower the populace economically has made different societies to prescribe various minimum rewards for labour. This recognition and empowerment to achieve a minimum standard economically describes the poverty line.

This is further sustained with the promotion of the enabling environment by the government and other organization in the performance of their social responsibility to the community. A poverty trap situation is, however, created when the people, even in the midst of high incomes and wages are intractably

and irredeemable below the poverty line such that their lives are characterized and dominated by deprivations and despair as a result of unpopular policies, imposition of sapping taxes, absence of infrastructural facilities and absence of social development.

**Development And Underdevelopment-** Unarguably, social and physical development largely helps to obliterate poverty from the lives of the people. In this context, development implies the transformation of the social, economic and political system from a low, simple, crude, primitive and savage state to a refined, high and advanced one. By the same token, therefore, underdevelopment becomes a social, economic, political and technological phenomenon that describes a society in a primitive, crude, low, unrefined and savage state; it describes that which is industrially and infrastructurally barren. Development is usually achieved through the provision of social and physical infrastructural facilities, improved environment, and pursuance of economic, democratic and other political ideals that would enhance the physical and social well being of individuals in the society and also transform the state to very great heights internationally. At this level, much emphasis is paid to industrialization, technological advancement, de-emphasis of importation, sanitized public service, prudent management of public funds, job creation, increase in exportation, respect and encouragement of the girl-child, regard and proper cultural orientation of the youths, arousing patriotic feelings in the people through dedicated and committed leadership; and obliteration of illiteracy, diseases, and malnutrition in the society.

Undoubtedly, these foregoing issues that border on poverty and development have attracted the attention of many scholars and intellectuals because of their peculiar effects on the lives of the people and the state. A careful attempt would be made to review, analyze, synthesize and reconcile with reality many of these works. Consequently, the paper adopts the content analysis approach in its methodology. And to achieve an orderly, organized, and a focused analysis of issues at stake, it would be imperative to guide the discourse with relevant theories and framework. Along this line, the basic needs theory, the state – industry relation theory, the state – command theory and the Ujaama or Tanzania four – prerequisite theory become very useful and relevant.

Popular with many international organizations and bodies is the theory of basic needs. Its popularity may be hinged on its less emphasis on abstract developmental concepts but the operationalisation of particular developmental ideals that can conspicuously reflect on the lives of the people and the nation. While it recognizes the relevance and significance of equality, employment and money in development, it places much emphasis on the obliteration and elimination of diseases, malnutrition, unemployment, political apathy, economic liberalization and the provision, actualization and satisfaction of minimum needs for infrastructural facilities such as electricity, pipe-borne water, accessible and motorable roads, good sanitary system and affordable food and shelter. The theory is attractive largely because of its

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conception of development as physically evident and visible in the lives of individuals and not as an abstraction as may be perceived when equated with national economic growth aggregates.

**State-Industry Model-** Beside this preceding theory is the state – industry relation model which emphasizes the importance of state pursuit of sound economic policies that are capable of enhancing the growth of key development oriented industries in the state. The state, here, puts machineries in place to discourage importation, encourage foreign investments and exportation, controls the exchange rate in a development friendly manner, establishes measures for the control of financial institutions; encouragement of the people to cultivate high saving habit, and creation of employment opportunities. This is an interventionist theory which was largely popularized by Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea and Singapore by their successful adoption and consequent transformation of their societies from underdeveloped to developed economies, (Iyoha, 1999;74)

**State-Command Theory-** Closely related to the above is the state – command theory. This theory which has been largely adopted from the state – socialist – command system of china places much emphasis on egalitarianism, individual comfort, promotion of the welfare of the people, non-reliance on imports in consumption foods, and job creation through state ownership of production means, establishment of small and big industries, encouragement of agricultural workers and significant unit autonomy.

**The Ujaama Theory-**Many scholars have contended that development has largely eluded Nigeria because of the insignificant participation of the people in developmental activities. And to achieve a sufficient development of the society, therefore, the people should not only be encouraged to participate directly in developmental activities but the government should emphasize the concept of community development with the different villages as focal point. This is the postulation of the Ujaama theory of development on four cardinal points, namely, the participation of the people, good utilization of land, sound policies and sound leadership but with less emphasis on monetization of the economy and industrial development, (Iyoha 1999:75).

Perhaps, these last two conditions are responsible for the little success the model achieved in Tanzania and its unpopularity as a development strategy. And no thanks to Tanzania leadership style that has made the people to continue to wallow in ignorance and poverty.

### **POVERTY AND UNDER DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

Interestingly, amidst series of flaunted poverty alleviation and development oriented measures such a partly canvassed by the Ujaama theory, Nigerians

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still wallow in stark and abject poverty and underdeveloped economy. Evidences of ignorance, political apathy, diseases, malnutrition; joblessness; prostitution, child trafficking (as shown by the recently arrested syndicate of the trade between Nigeria and the Republic of Benin); child-labour; high incidence of foods and drugs adulteration (as revealed by Dore Akunyuli's organization); assassination; religious oppression of the women folk ( as demonstrated by Amina Lawal's case); armed robbery; low access to portable water, shelter and communication (which explains why Nigeria had only 450,000 lines before the advent of the current GSM when it had telephone since 1909, (Vanguard, September 24, 2003:30); epileptic electricity supply amidst about \$500 million the government spent in the sector between 1999 and 2002 (Vanguard, October 3, 2003:17); falling educational standard occasioned by under funding of the sector and incessant strikes by university lecturers; exploitative and unrepentant attitude of the leadership (as demonstrated by the unsound and unpopular policies such as that of deregulation of the down stream oil sector without a corresponding infrastructural development), and the proposed bill on the proscription of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC); misuse of funds (such as the N42 billion spent on the Abuja National Stadium which had its Velodrome collapse before it could even be handed over by the contractors, and the N20 billion spent to host the 8<sup>th</sup> All Africa Games in the midst of poverty stricken Nigerians); intermittent and endless communal clashes, (such as exist in the Niger-Delta); vandalization of oil pipe – lines in demonstration of anger against the government; and high corruption among public officers overwhelmingly dominate the Nigerian landscape. It was this satanic corruption of public officers that Transparency International reflected when Nigeria was exposed as the most corrupt country in the world only after Bangladesh.

This sad state was confirmed by the erstwhile President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Olusegun Aremu Obasanjo, when he owned up that he was aware of the great sufferings of Nigerians.

In this scenario, it is no wonder that 87 per cent of Nigerians is living below the poverty line. Specifically, 93 per cent of Nigerians live on less than one dollar a day. This situation grew worse from a 24 per cent poverty level at 1960 as revealed by UNICEF poverty index, (Nnamani, 2003). What is, however, amazing is that Nigeria is the 10<sup>th</sup> largest gas deposit in the world with cubic feet of 159 billion but with a utilization of a mere 12.5 per cent associated gas (Vanguard, October 24, 2003:10). Besides, Nigeria is the sixth largest world producer of crude oil and it is the only member in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, OPEC, that imports fuel, premium motor spirit, for local consumption. This is so because, the country with a population of over 150 million peoples has only four refineries, two in Port Harcourt, one in Warri, Delta State and another in Kaduna. Apart from the fact that these refineries are not enough to meet the local and international needs of the nation, they are all working below 20 per cent of their installed capacity. Between 2004-2008 the Federal Government spent between \$400 -

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\$700 million on the Turn- Around Maintenance (TAM) of these refineries but there is nothing on ground to show for these huge investments.

The implication of this development is that Nigeria exports its crude oil to other countries and imports Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) at exorbitant costs using the prevailing sky – rocketing exchange rates. In the process, all other domestic and developmental by – products such as kerosene, domestic gas, industrial oil and gas and many others are lost. The final products that are, consequently, imported into the country are usually substandard and these have caused untold hardship on the people as many vehicles and human lives are ruined.

The poverty and underdeveloped state of the Nigerian economy is further evidenced by its dwindling foreign reserve and large reliance on importation of domestic and industrial materials. According to the Central Bank of Nigeria monthly report of July, Nigerian external reserves witnessed a downward slide of 0.62 per cent in June reducing from \$7.689 billion. Sadly, this has been the regular pattern. Whereas, the country earned a total of \$1.090 billion in the month of July, \$1.296 billion was spent on imported materials. The resultant effect of this was that her foreign exchange savings were depleted to the tune of \$205 million, (CBN).

Besides, the national economic growth rate of 3.5 percent per annum is not encouraging in the least as this would not be able to lift the nation out of the clutches of poverty. Although the government, often, sets a target of 5 per cent annually to prevent the economic ill from getting worse but it actually requires a growth rate of 7 per cent to turn the economy around according to the forecast of International Monetary Funds (IMF) on the economy. Such measurement, however, may be mere rhetorics and abstractions as the true indices of poverty alleviation or elimination can be implied from the lives of the people as suggested by the basic needs theory. Truly, Nigerians should naturally radiate such economic development because of the abundance of human and material resources, which nature has endowed the country with but for particular factors, this comfort has eluded her.

### **CAUSES OF POVERTY AND UNDER DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

In the 10<sup>th</sup> conference of the National Economic Summit Group that was held to study, analyze Nigeria economy and consider ways out of its log jam, Paul Collier of Oxford University, posited that:

*...the vast resources available to Nigeria have been used unproductively, to support an elite class who does nothing but gained so much from economic rent open to the class through access to those in authority, while the majority of the population have floundered into a (poverty) condition worse than that found elsewhere in Africa, (Vanguard, October 24, 2003:10)*

This position was further corroborated by Steve Azaiki in “Iniquities in Nigerian Politics”, when he observed that;

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*...the exploration arm of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, the Nigerian Petroleum Development Company established in the 1980's has suffered a stunted growth, unlike similar bodies in Libya and Nigeria. Even the oil wells and fields the company developed in the late 1980's have been turned over to some major foreign firms and local operators owned by powerful military officers and their cronies. Regrettably, therefore, after nearly 50 years of oil business in the country, Nigerians do not control up to 1% of aggregate assets, (Azaiki, 2003:17).*

The situation is made worse by this elite class as the resources acquired from the Nigerian economy and environment are not ploughed back into the development of the economy by way of tangible and significant investments but are selfishly and unpatriotically sent out into foreign countries. Evidences abound where Nigerians are partners to many industrialists and business tycoons in Europe, America and Asia; and so much fund stashed away in these foreign countries. A major case in point is the funds of late Mohammed Abacha, family members and cronies in Swiss and other foreign banks. The World Bank and Paul Collier have astonishingly revealed that the terrible poverty and underdevelopment situation in Nigeria is not as a result of inability to save or absence of saving but that Nigerians have decided to invest their savings in foreign economies. In fact, as at 1998, Nigerian private savings and wealth abroad was unprecedentedly over 70 per cent and this has, unfortunately, been worsening over the years. Specifically, Nigerians private assets in foreign banks in 2003 stood at U.S. \$170 billion. This according to B.J.K Randle, President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria: *...represents a sizable chunk of the U.S. \$300 billion which Nigeria has earned from oil in the last twenty years together with unrepatriated non-oil export earnings, (Vanguard, October 24, 2003:10).*

The implication of this is that no creditor would be willing to write –off or forgive Nigeria any of her debt. The foreign debt of the country during the period under review stood at U.S. \$31 billion (this has, however been reduced to \$4 billion) as confirmed by the erstwhile Minister of Finance, Okonjo Iweala, Vice-President of the World Bank, and who was, perhaps, in Nigeria on a monitoring mission to ensure compliance with the World Bank idea of development and poverty alleviation. This police duty becomes worrisome because of the failure of International Monetary Fund (IMF) initiatives on African countries to yield the desired results. Such failure and inability to turn around the poverty and indebtedness of poor African states was admitted by IMF in a working paper on IMF initiatives for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC). This fact was further echoed by erstwhile President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria in his address at the 58<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. He observed that external debt repayment was hampering development in Nigeria and that the Heavily Indebted Middle Income Countries initiative (HIMIC) of IMF which affects Nigeria has not helped in the least.



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The burden of the colossal debt and the accompanying huge interests have largely pauperized and undermined Nigeria development. According to a report from the Debt Management Office (DMO), the country has paid a whopping cumulative U.S. \$33 billion on servicing its debts in 18 years as shown in the table below: (DMO, 2003).

**Table 1:** debt servicing from 1985 – 2003.

<b>S/NO</b>	<b>YEAR</b>	<b>AMOUNT, U.S. DOLLARS</b>
1	1985	1.5 billion
2.	1990	10.841 billion
3.	1995	21.905 billion
4.	2000	21.905 billion
5.	2003	33.288 billion

*Source: Report of Debt Management Office*

The debt-servicing burden of Nigeria has been growing worse since 1985 as shown above. Whereas a mere U.S. \$31billion, in relation to the private wealth abroad, was owed the Breton Woods Institutions and the London and Paris clubs, a whopping U.S. \$33.288 billion was used to service it in 18 (eighteen) years which meant an average of U.S. \$1.8 billion yearly. This does not in anyway translate into capital repayment. In fact, since 1999, the country was only able to reduce its foreign debt by about N600 billion, which could have been used for infrastructural development in the country, (Vanguard, October 24, 2003:10). However, this huge debt has been traded off by the government and new debt profile is just beginning to grow.

This position is not helped by the unwillingness of many advanced countries to assist in the fight against corruption in Nigeria. The President of IMF, Herst Kohler, has lamented the lack of commitment and low attention given global poverty in the policy agenda of advanced countries. An extension of this is the new economic and political concept, globalization, a term which describes extreme liberalization of trade barriers among countries but which is a selfish and conscious attempt by the advanced countries to further pauperize the economies of the poor and underdeveloped countries in order to project and protect their economic interest. This is so because the former needs an unrestricted market for her products. According to IMF, globalization represents:

*The growing economic interdependence of countries worldwide through the increasing volume and variety of cross-boarder transactions in goods and services and of international capital flows, and also through the more rapid and widespread diffusion of technology.*

Besides,

*Globalization also entails the greater movement of people across national borders and the relentless rise of similar standards across the globe. The increasingly similarity of standards is driven by the diffusion of technology and the diffusion of America popular culture and by the dictates of industries*

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*and commercial economic organizations. But the central element .of globalization is that it is driven by companies in their relentless search for market share and profits... (Vanguard, September 24, 2003:22)*

The economic reality, however, is that a country such as Nigeria only enjoys asymmetrical relationship with the United States and other developed countries. This relationship is technologically one sided as Nigeria has no technology or industrial products to export to the advanced countries. The implication therefore, is that Nigeria becomes a willing market and a dumping ground for the products of these advanced countries whose industrial production has overtaken their local and neighbouring markets.

The effects of dumping on the economic growth of Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. Many industries are stifled and unemployment becomes the other of the day. Many textile factories in Nigeria have shut down and about 50,000 workers in the industry have lost their jobs. Besides, the shoe industry has been badly hit. Companies such as Perfecta Shoes, Passat Rossy, Anjalin and Bata Nigeria, that later transformed to FAMAD, have all closed down and workers in the industry totaling about 35,000 have since lost their jobs. The meaning of this is that globalization has encouraged dumping and patronage of foreign goods to the detriment of home – made goods, (Vanguard September 17, 2003:17)

In the area of “greater movement of people across national border” Nigeria has thrived well particularly as this has enabled America, Europe and Asia to drain the best brains form the country. In this circumstance, it becomes particularly difficult for the country to develop economically and technologically. The globalization trend has largely encouraged smuggling of imported items into the country. This is so because the government in its double economic standard and feeble attempts to encourage the growth of local industries slams policies against unbridled importation of foreign goods. But the substandard nature of many of the home made goods further wet the appetite of Nigerians for foreign goods. And matters are even made worse because the Department of Customs connive with smugglers to enrich themselves. The controversy between the Nigerian textile manufacturers ad the Department of Customs illuminate this. The Textile manufactures accused the customs of enriching themselves daily with N1.5 billion, which ordinarily should have been on smuggled textile into the country, (Vanguard, September, 2003:23)

The inordinate greed and corrupt practices of public servants are essentially responsible for the burden of Nigeria. A Desk Officer for the Philippines marveled at the attitude of Nigerians when Nigerian delegate arrived Manila to buy the surplus rice of the Philippine government. The Nigerian delegate bargained to increase the price instead of reducing price in order to achieve high commissions for themselves, (Vanguard, October 24, 2003:10). Besides, in the budget presentation of the minister of Finance in 1997, it was revealed that:among the debt that Nigeria was expected to repay

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was U.S \$1 billion which was simply shared in Switzerland and never even reached our shores!! (Vanguard, October 24, 2003)

Furthermore, according to a study by the Nigerian government in 1997, 40 percent of the monies lent to Nigeria by international organizations did not actually get to Nigeria and another part of it was misappropriated. Yet another 40 percent was used to set up industries and companies that did not live to see the light of day. Again, goods that were designated to come to Nigeria were diverted and off-loaded in places such as Las Palms, Lisbon, and Rotterdam, (Vanguard, October 24, 2003:10).

Corruption in Nigeria knows no bound. Many infrastructural facilities are in decay and absent not because the state is not recognized but monies awarded for their provision and rehabilitation do not get to their destinations. The eastern roads are a case in point. These contract were awarded but were shabbily done and yet approved by the supervising ministry as having met the required standard, (Vanguard, September 2003:39). Daily, the government is defrauded of large funds by public officials to the detriment of the ordinary people. Between 1998 and 2003, the federal government spent over N1.5 trillion on parastatals with little or nothing to show for it, (Mantu, 2003). A break down of this is as follows:

**Table 2: money spent on parastatals**

S/NO	YEAR	AMOUNT, U.S. DOLLAR
1.	1998	6 billion
2.	1999	8 billion
3.	200	1.4 billion
4.	2001	4 billion

*Source: Vanguard Sept. 25<sup>th</sup>, 2003, p3.*

The above table shows that U.S. \$4 billion was spent in 2000 and 2001 respectively, most of the funds would, undoubtedly, have ended in private pockets. In addition, in spite of the National Assembly position against the Ajaokuta Steel Complex completion contract, the federal government went ahead with the contract award at U.S. \$3.6 billion to an American firm SOLGAS, as against a previous proposal for the same job two year earlier at U.S. \$451 million. The objection of the National Assembly was on the ground that the American firm has no office in Lagos where contract could have been signed and it only has an asset base of U.S. \$15 million. Also, the Abuja national stadium was built at a cost of N42 billion Naira. The project was, however, costed by the World Bank not to have exceeded N28 billion.

Moreover, the Cart-Horse policy approach on policy making of the federal government is a major bane to development and poverty alleviation in the country. This is a situation where policies are made before consultation with relevant bodies and agencies. This is a blazing administrative insanity that defiles rational logic. Often, the federal government makes policies unannounced and without consultation with the private sector, State governments and the organized labour. The result of this approach has always been breakdown in the economic and political systems. This attitude of the government demonstrates the insensitivity of the government to the

sufferings of the ordinary people and it further shows that the people do not in anyway affect and influence the policies of the government. Instances here can easily be drawn from the minimum wage palava when the federal government unilaterally increased the income of federal workers by 12.5 percent without consultation with the state government for a corresponding increase; the federal government unilaterally asked the state governments to contribute 10 percent of their earnings or allocation to the funding of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) without prior consultation and a corresponding increase in the allocation to the state governments; the monetization policy of the federal government where public servants in the three tiers of government are to have their material benefits monetized without a prior consultation with the relevant and concerned bodies; and the complete deregulation of the down stream oil sector which has introduced a new price regime. This was done without consultation, prior announcement and without even creating the enabling environment for such policy to thrive so that pains and suffering of the masses would not be exacerbated. How does one expect to reap fruitful benefits from such a policy when premium motor spirit is not refined in Nigeria but imported from such deregulation when the four refineries in the country are operating below a quarter of their installed capacity? How does one enjoy such policy when the eighteen licenses granted by the federal government for private refineries have not been consummated? What guarantee and assurance do the masses have that the big oil independent marketers would not form a cartel and rip the masses off and send them to their early grave?

Factors, issues, and situations that engender poverty and underdevelopment in Nigeria are legion. Many of the local and state governments that are very close to the people have little or no resources for developmental projects. Their inability to generate significant funds internally has made them to virtually rely on federal allocations for funds. And the much awaited funds are usually used in the payment of huge salaries of political appointees and other public servants. The situation at the centre is not too different. Over 60 percent of the revenues of the federal government is expended on the payment of salaries and overhead of civil servants who, out of the country population of about 150 million peoples, constitute a mere one percent, (Vanguard, September 29, 2003:3)

The absence of political goodwill of the government to prosecute corrupt public officers has made siphoning of public funds rife. The existence of the Independent Corrupt Practice and Other Related Commission (ICPC), and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), anti-corruption agencies of the federal government has contributed virtually nothing to the good management of public funds. Their existence has only, perhaps, made public officers aware that it may not be business as usual. Other issues include poor and visionless leadership; little or no emphasis on information communication technology (ICT); inability to collect taxes and remit same appropriately; lack of maintainace culture; unfriendly environment for investment; emphasis on party, ethnic and religious affiliation in

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appointments at the expense of merit; infiltration and dominance of foreigners in top positions of multinational oil companies and the attendant illegal repatriation of funds by these expatriates; and the neglect and abandonment of the host communities by oil/gas multinational companies in terms of infrastructural development. All these have untold negative impact on the lives of the people.

#### **EFFECTS OF PROVERTY AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT**

The concomitant effects of these social, political and economic ills on the generality of the masses and the state are underdevelopment and poverty, which bring in its wake trepidation, despair, frustration, hopelessness, political apathy, crime, destructive tendencies, revolutionary tendencies, insurgency, communal clashes, arson, diseases and death.

#### **ATTEMPTS AT CURBING POVERTY AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT**

True, the federal government has attempted severally to curb poverty and promote development through the setting up of various specialized agencies and programmes. But these have been feeble attempts and lackluster measures as the crux and bane of poverty alleviation and development in the foregoing discourse have not been sufficiently and adequately attended to. Some of the specialized agencies and programmes of the federal government in this regard include the establishment of Industrial Development Centers (IDC); National Accelerated Food Production programmes; Integrated Rural Development (IRD); Operation Feed the Nation; The Green Revolution; Community Development (CD); Self-reliance Programme; Directorate of Employment (NDE); Better Life for Rural Women (BLRW); Oil and Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission, (NDDC) National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP); and the New Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS).

Many of these agencies and programmes which are now extinct largely could not attain their objectives as a result of embezzlement, misappropriation of funds, bad leadership and bad governance. It may be too early in the day to begin a thorough assessment of PAP, NAPEP, NDDC, and NEEDS as there is a silver lining in every dark cloud.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

In this concluding part of the discourse, some salient recommendations are proffered. For the achievement of sustainable growth and development, much emphasis should be placed on E-governance and information communication technology (ICT). According to Susana Finquelierrich;

*Electronic democracy and electronic governance are new buzz words coined to describe the increasing use of communication technologies for improved internal management and popular participation in government, (UNDP, 2001).*

Generally, the use of ICT helps to promote development and poverty alleviation in the society. Jobs are created; access to basic services is improved; government effectiveness and efficiency is improved; government information is easily shared with people, and particularly the poor and women in the rural areas gain access to government and its information, (UN Report, 2001).

Besides, the use of internet and other communication facilities encourage the exchange of ideas and thereby creates a situation of “brain development” instead of brain drain”. Its importance in development was emphasized by Noah Samara of Ethiopia, founder of World Space, when he posited thus:

*Look behind the wealth of nations and you find lack of information. For sustainable development, civil society and intellectual production, information is truly the need for every need. (UNDP, 2001).*

Decentralization of governance is another pre-requisite to development. This is a system where the political system is split into several dependent and cooperative units such that governance is brought close to the people especially the poor and women in the rural areas. Such decentralization is easily attainable with ICT. Importantly, there must be in existence a genuine democratic system of government. Such a government should be truly transparent, and accountable and reflective of the democratic wishes and aspirations of the people. Again, the policies of the government should be a reflection and representation of the needs and desire of the people. In the words of S.O.J. Ojo;

*Societal progress and development are attainable only when public policies are addressed to the fundamental problems of society. (Ojo, 1997: 230-231)*

And government should pursue only those policies that: Seek to dismantle exiting structures of society, which create conditions of inequity, mass unemployment, hunger, poverty, frustration, social economic anxiety and insecurity, (Ojo, Ibid)

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