CAUSES AND STRATEGIES FOR THE ALLEVIATION OF URBAN POVERTY, SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *Our study is on causes and strategies for the alleviation of urban poverty, security and development in Nigeria. The main thrust of the study is to establish the nexus between poverty, security and development of urban cities in Nigeria. The study generated secondary data from relevant books, journals, websites, magazines, etc., and applied content analysis as a tool of analysis for the secondary data to achieve its objectives. The study conceptualised certain concepts such as urban poverty, security, and development. The study finding proved that over population, unemployment, poor education and illiteracy, high cost of living, high dependency, etc, as the causes of urban poverty in Nigeria. The study further established that scarcity and hunger, raping of women and young girls, kidnapping and street killing, violence and criminality, etc., as implications of urban poverty in urban cities in Nigeria. Our research indicated urban poverty alleviation strategies to enhance urban security and development in Nigeria. Such strategies include youth empowerment, regulation of cost of living, provision of basic infrastructure in Nigerian urban cities, etc. Finally, when these strategies are applied, it will go a long way to reduce urban poverty and enhance security and development in Nigeria.*

Keywords: *Urban poverty, security, development, poverty alleviation.*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of urban poverty has in recent time attracted the attention of policy makers and scholars not so much for the novelty of the phenomenon, but the chord it strikes with the issue of security of lives and properties of those affected by it (urban poor) and those tangentially connected to them. Urbanisation itself was believed to be a process that attracts its own fall-out, hence, wherever it occurs, it is logically expected to be accompanied by a marked increase in various forms of deviant behaviour, creation of suburbs, slums and poverty (Igbinovia et al., 2003:51). Whether in Western Europe where it first occurred or in Third World Countries, where it is emerging fast, the creation of urban centres has led to people migrating from their villages to the cities in their numbers in search of the good life in the city. All of these had come with a very huge cost among which is poverty. Indeed, as argued by Thomas (2008), poverty today has become so pandemic

that it is no longer limited to the so called "Third World" countries but can be found even in the advanced countries of the West, where rising social inequality coupled with the promotion of neo-liberal economic policies has left many people impoverished.

In Nigeria and some other Africa states, the effect of urbanization and urban poverty has been quite palpable yet, probably due to bureaucratic inertia and/or leadership ineptitude not much seems to have been done to check the challenges. This may ostensibly be due to the fact that government officials have not understood the nexus between poverty and the current security challenges faced in the urban centers and the grave implications of all of these problems on the developmental strides in the state. Sequel to this, this research will attempt to outline the causes of urban poverty, strategies for alleviation of the urban poverty and it nexus with security and development of urban cities in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES
Urban Poverty

It is easier to understand the concept of urban poverty if we first define what "poverty" is and later superimpose the prefix "urban" to it. Poverty is a concept that has been with us even before the beginning of recorded history (Igbinovia et al., 2005), yet with lack of unanimity among scholars on what constitutes its non-material aspects (Thomas, 2008). From the material perspective, poverty refers to the condition of having insufficient resources or income. In other word, it refers to lack of food, clothing, housing, clean and drinkable water, and sanitation (Igbinovia et al., 2005; Thomas, 2008). On the other hand, poverty when interpreted from its nebulous non-material perspective, encompasses such subjective issues as human dignity; opportunity/access to common land, water and fodder; and even choices. Poverty can also be absolute or relative. Absolute poverty which is the same thing as extreme poverty or even destitution is a situation of having nothing at all to subsist on; and this is the type that threatens one's health or life and can logically propel the sufferer to employ whatever means available, legal or not, to extenuate the gravity of his/her circumstance . Relative poverty as the name implies refers to the poverty that results when one compares himself or herself to his/her counterparts whether locally or globally.

This work aligns itself to the two conceptions of poverty above, material and non-material. This is because in Nigeria and any part of the world, poverty presents itself in these two forms. With the growth of towns and cities in the country and the concomitant influx of people into the cities in search of work and comfort, the problem of material and non-material poverty became commonly found in the cities. Urban poverty in Nigeria can therefore be seen as the kind of poverty noticeable among people who live in cities like Port Harcourt, Aba, Lagos, Onitsha, Kano, Abuja, etc. Although it implications are enormous.

Security

Security, like most social science concepts, does not lend itself to a universally acceptable definition. For instance, some scholars including Walt (1991) see security from state-centred perspective and hence it is the institution of peace and prevention of conflicts through military means like deterrence and protection. Others such as Gahia (2008) do not subscribe to the fact that security has to do with only the traditional military realm. Indeed, according to Francis (2006,p.23) "the traditional military conception of security is grossly inadequate as an intellectual tool as it does not explain the essence of the emergence of the

normality source of threat to security at the individual, state or global levels". Consequently, in contemporary time, the concept of security has been defined, or better still, redefined, to encompass such non-military aspects as the environment, poverty, human security, ethno-religious issues and such other issues that constitute a threat to human existence (Ayoob, 1997; Francis, 2006). This second perception of security is aptly dubbed the "non – traditionalist" conception of security. This work, by virtue of its emphasis, subscribes to the latter, definition of security. Needless to say that if poverty and other human security issues in Nigeria's urban centres are addressed squarely, some of the obstacles to development in the country can be overcome.

Development

Development is one concept whose definition has always been controversial. Indeed with it many dimensions (economic, social, political, spatial, etc.,), it will come to no one as a surprise why its definition is ambivalent to some and confusing to others. Being an ideologically laden concept, any attempt to precisely define it will invariably spark off a barrage of rhetorics among social scientists which in the end renders the definition unhelpful (Anikpo, 1986). In view of the dilemma presented to us above, we will not dissipate energy foraging the various definitions of the subject postulated by various scholars, but will summarise them under the two leading schools of thought on the issue-liberal and Marxist schools. For the liberals, development is coterminous with growth in a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and must be exogenously induced. Rostow (1960) as a frontline apologist of the liberal school had postulated that a country can be said to have " taken off" to development when it is able to raise its net national product from 5% to 10% or more.

Marxist scholars on the other hand see development as a people –centred concept. Unlike the liberals who interpreted development from the standpoint of growth (volume of investment in the economy, number of cars, telephones and aero-planes produced), the Marxist see development as having as its essence the welfare of the people (Yesufu, 1993). For the Marxist, if poverty level among individuals, inequality and unemployment figures have reduced, and if individuals in any given society now begin to enjoy greater personal freedom, increased skills and capacity, become more creative and experience marked improvement in their material wellbeing, then without doubt, that is a period of development for that society (Seers, 1973; Rodney, 1982). Seen from this Marxist perspective, development and poverty are therefore diametrically linked phenomena - the more developed a society is, the less the incidence of poverty and conversely the higher the level of poverty in that society, the less developed the latter would be. The above scenario therefore reinforces the need to ensure that endemic poverty is drastically reduced so as to guarantee peace and accelerated development of the polity. It follows, a priori that to achieve this, we must know the factors that causes poverty especially in the urban centres.

METHODOLOGY

The research relied on secondary data which was generated from relevant text books, journals, magazines, newspapers, websites, etc., on the subject matter of urban poverty, poverty alleviation, security and development. Content analysis was used as tool of analysis to analyse the secondary data, upon which the study achieves its objectives.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
CAUSES OF POVERTY IN URBAN CITIES IN NIGERIA
　　　While it is incontrovertible that majority of Nigerians live in rural areas, the fact still remains that following from the colonial era, when the British concentrated their smothering development effort in some centres where they chose to live (Ake, 1981). Many persons left the villages for these enclaves which gradually developed into towns and cities. Consequently, it is apropos to say that beginning from the colonial period (or shortly before colonialism as in the case of Kano, Sokoto and Maidugari), Nigeria started tending towards urbanization. However, this urbanization has not come without its cost; the villages have literally become deserted and consigned to a state of neglect and decay, the village economy, based predominantly on agriculture, has stagnated starving both the villagers and city dwellers, while the cities themselves have become over-populated leading to slums, unemployment (as too many people chase too few jobs) and worse of it all, poverty and crime.

　　　A cursory look at our discussion above will tend to create the impression that the cause of poverty in Nigeria's urban centres is the urbanization process itself; but as Igbinovia et al., (2005,p.599), has cautioned in another context: "poverty has many causes, some of them very basic…… But these basic causes are complex and not easily eradicated. In most cases, the causes and effects of poverty interact, so that what makes people poor also creates conditions that keep them poor". The implication of the above statement is that some of the factors we may isolate here as causes of poverty may also turn around to be later discussed as its effects.

Over-Population
　　　A major cause of urban poverty in Nigeria is over-population. As we earlier noted, there are too many persons in our urban cities, and with a high population density, the resources available will not be enough to go round, the result of which is endemic poverty. Like many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria's agricultural yield is not enough to support the teaming population in her cites; worse still, the birth rate has continued to rise annually out-striping United Nations Fund Population Activities (UNFPA) forecast for the country. All of these have dialectically interacted to exacerbate the poor existential condition of the city dwellers.

Unemployment
　　　Unemployment is a major cause of poverty in our urban centres. The Nigerian state, before now, was the major employer of labour in the country, but with the global emphasis on "roll back the state" it has had to shirk itself of the responsibility of directly providing jobs for its citizens. Unfortunately the private sector on whose shoulder the gauntlet now fell is too asphyxiated to rise up to this challenge, the result of which is the exponential increase in the number of unemployed people in the country. Sadly enough, with unemployment bloating the dependency ratio (number of those without work who depend on those who are fortunate to have jobs), it also arouses the criminal instinct in the youths. Epelle (2016) cited in Epelle & Uranta (2014) noted emphatically, that poverty has been on the increase in the Nigeria in the recent past, while conversely the standard of living has continued to fall. Continuing, the scholars averred that this unemployment induced poverty is more endemic in the North-Western and North-Eastern parts of the country with statistics of 70% and 69% respectively, and not surprisingly the regions turned out to be hot-beds of

Boko-Haram nihilism and other forms of ethno-religious fundamentalism (Epelle, 2016). What can be gleaned from the above exposition is that unemployment may not only cause poverty in the urban centres in the country but can also be responsible for the upsurge in youth restiveness currently being witnessed all around us. This is because the unemployed serve as easy recruits for sponsors of socio-political unrests in the country. After all, the idle mind, they say, is the devil's workshop.

Poor Education and Illiteracy

Inadequate educational opportunities are still problem in Nigeria. In spite of the number of public and private schools in Nigeria, the number of candidates seeking placements in these schools still outstrips the available vacancies in them. Due to the poor status of the country caused largely by our profligate and inept leaders, illiteracy looms large in the country as the government has not seen the nexus between education, human security and accelerated development of the polity. Again, poorly educated people in the towns and cities will always go for poorly paid jobs as they lack the requisite skills and competencies to go for or retain white-collar/high-paying jobs.

High Cost of Living

Nigerian cities just like urban centres in other parts of the world have high cost of living. Most basic facilities needed to sustain life like water, food and electricity are noted to cost more in urban centres than in the rural areas. Even housing which the average man in the village can take for granted is reputed to take a huge chunk off the wages of the urban dwellers. Consequently, those who cannot find high-paying jobs in the urban areas experience a vicious circle of poverty where their monthly salary is exhausted even on the pay day itself on account of settlement of previously incurred bills.

High Dependency Ratio

With a lot of able bodied men and women trooping to the urban centres on a daily basis in search of work, many of them end up putting up with family members and friends in the city, while applying for these elusive jobs. However, while waiting for the God of providence to smile on them, they exert pressure on the economic survival of their hosts. In addition, the African extended family system also implies that "lucky" employees in the urban centres must divide their income to cater for the socio-economic needs of their less fortunate relatives in the rural areas. The net effect of all these expenses on the urban dwellers is the refraction of poverty into their pockets.

Low paying Jobs and City Exigencies

Many jobs today in Nigerian urban centres do not pay well. Even the government employees, except those with covert access to the public till, do not go home with a living wage. In fact, today in Nigeria, it is widely held that the "take home pay" cannot take the average worker home; hence he lives in a nebulous situation where he works for a living but remains perpetually poor as if though unemployed. In addition to this paradoxical situation, a typical urban dweller in today's Nigeria is expected to contribute monthly for street sanitation, neighboourhood vigilante, settlement of cult groups and area boys, and a few other personal/luxurious needs. These affect his/her savings and have the tendency of leaving him poor relative to a modest worker who lives in the village

SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF URBAN POVERTY ON URBAN SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA Scarcity and Hunger

Scarcity and hunger is expressed within the context of food scarcity leading to poor feeding and malnutrition in the cities. Food security is an important aspect of human security that requires adequate attention to ensure peaceful human existence in the society, as its inadequacy threatens the peace of human existence. World Bank (2006), and Kamdor (2007) opined that food scarcity leads to increase in prices of food items and other commodities , accounting for poor feeding and malnutrition, with the poor seen as the main casualty in the cities. In Nigerian cities, food scarcity affects the food demand and supply relations and leads to death or loss of manpower and productive capacity in the city. This poses security challenge to the development of Nigerian urban cities.

Raping of Women and Young Girls

Women and young girls are also victims of urban poverty in Nigeria, as poverty accounts for the inability of the poor men to afford the required resources to marry women of their choice or maintain their already married wife in the city. But these poor men have emotional needs, and when the urge arises, such men rape women and young girls in an attempt to satisfy their sexual urge, thereby leading to unwanted pregnancy, spread of diseases, increase in crime rate, and general insecurity of the victims in the cities.

Kidnapping and Street Killing

Many kidnappers attribute their actions to poverty and unemployment in the city, hence they engage in kidnapping to earn income for survival. This trend threatens the security and development of urban cities in Nigeria, as people are kidnapped for ransom, tortured and in most cases killed on account of inability of the family members of the kidnapped person to pay the demanded ransom.

Violence and Criminality

In most urban cities in Nigeria, such as Port Harcourt, Yenagoa, Lagos, Enugu, Calabar, etc., the waterfronts and slums, which are indices of urban poverty, serve as the breeding ground for urban terrorists using the platform of cult groups and gangs formation. The poor, who are predominantly occupants of such environments, find it easy to engage in initiations into the cult and gang groups on account of no security check on them in the place, and thereafter organize themselves into groups and counter groups to carry out violent attacks and other forms of criminal activities in the city. These violent attacks and criminal actions of the groups affect negatively, the security and concomitant development of the urban areas in Nigeria.

Increase in Cult Groups and Ethnic Militias

Wilson (2018) sees the cult groups and ethnic militias as Non-State Security Actors with criminal and selfish motives. With the issue of poverty in the urban areas in Nigeria, the Non-State Security Actors function effectively, as they are hired by the wealthy people to provide security for them (the rich) in the cities, thereby leading to security capitalism in Nigerian cities. The security for hire and its payment attracts more people into the cult and ethnic militia groups in the cities, thereby multiplying the number of cult groups and ethnic militias in Nigerian cities with its effect on security and development of the cities.

Political Thuggary

The urban poor are characterized as those who are economically less endowed and unable to afford basic needs of life in the cities, yet live in the cities with the hope of survival. In an attempt to secure a living, the politicians hire and use them to cause political violence, assassinations and several other lawless activities. Though, they are paid by the politicians for their services, but such services are inimical to the security and development of Nigerian urban centres.

Vulnerability to Diseases

The poor at all levels including the urban poor in Nigeria are prone to diseases, and other epidemic attacks in the cities. Due to their inability to afford good drinking water and decent accommodation, they drink unclean water and live in slums and waterfronts, thereby being exposed to different infectious diseases in the cities or even death, particularly when they are not adequately attended to by the state.

Arms Commercialisation and Proliferation

With the heavy and small arms in the possession of the cult groups, gangs and ethnic militias in the cities, they resort to hire the arms for violent services with the aim of raising more money for survival. Largely among these groups are the urban poor who are recruited into the groups to fight against their perceived deprivation and seek for survival in the city. In the urban cities of the Niger Delta Region such as Ahoada, Port Harcourt, Sapele, Warri, Calabar, Eket, Yenagoa, Omoku, Aba, etc., it is the members of the cult groups that own and control large sophisticated private arms for their operations. They commercialise these arms for profit making, thereby encouraging the proliferation and illegal possession of arms in the cities. This trend poses security challenges to the development of the urban cities in Nigeria.

Human insecurity

Human security centers on security of people in the state, rather than security of the state. Such security is in the areas of economic, political, food, health, environmental sectors, etc., and is generally classified as freedom from fear and freedom from wants. Ironically, poverty creates inability and insecurity of the poor, including those in the cities. The inability and insecurity of the poor in the cities makes the poor to engage in all sorts of activities that threaten human security with its attendant implications on security and development of the cities in Nigeria.

URBAN POVERTY ALLEVIATION AS STRATEGIES FOR URBAN SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Formal Education and Reorientation of the Urban Youths

Dewey (1944) sees education as a process of acquiring new skill, knowledge, value, belief and habit in the society. In our view, it becomes formal education when it is carried out in a structured environment usually classroom, workshop, laboratory, field etc., with the aim of using the same education to improve capacity of the learner. Reorientation on the other hand is the act of change in direction and course of action in one's life. Considering the above, it is important for the state, multinationals, and wealthy individuals to engage the urban poor in formal education and life reorientation, imbuing in them new skills and knowledge, thus enhancing their good living in the cities.

Economic Diversification and Entrepreneurial Revolution

Osalor (2017) opines that over concentration on crude oil is responsible for the failure in Nigerian economy, hence, the need to diversify the economy as a way out. This study therefore states that economic diversification, entrepreneurial revolution, and adequate utilization of various resources will lead to emergence of multiple employment opportunities for the idle and poor youths in the cities, reducing the perceived urban poverty in Nigerian cities, and enhancing long-term and sustainable economic development of resources capable of developing the cities.

Youth Empowerment

Youth empowerment entails encouraging the youth to take charge of their lives by addressing their situation and taking action to improve their access to resources and transform their consciousness through their beliefs, value and actions (Kar et al., 2009). This empowerment is achieved through youth education, participation in skill acquisition programmes, accessing funds for small scale entrepreneurship, etc, and is aimed at improving quality of life of the youths. Urban youths need empowerments in areas of trade, skill acquisition, funding for formal education, funding for small scale business, and opportunity to participate in various economic development programmes. This will encourage the poor to improve on their standard of living and reduce urban poverty in Nigeria.

Effective implementation of Urban Development Policies

The state should effectively enforce urban development policies to reduce poverty in the cities. Such policies as Housing Scheme aimed at providing adequate and decent accommodation for the people, Health Care Scheme aimed at providing quick and accessible health care for all, Sanitation Services to ensure prompt cleanliness of the city, Free Basic Education to guarantee basic education for every child, including children of the poor, State Mass Transit Scheme to provide affordable transport for all, State Water Scheme to provide portable and drinkable water, etc. These urban development policies are vital for the alleviation of urban poverty and development of the cities in Nigeria.

Provision of Basic Infrastructure in the Urban Areas

Basic infrastructures are those important facilities and systems needed in an area, including the urban areas for effective functioning of the economy of such area. Such infrastructures are good road, portable and drinking water, electricity, affordable and decent accommodation, telecommunication, etc., and are needed to enhance the living conditions of the people. The state and corporate organisations should provide these facilities in the urban areas to reduce poverty of the urban poor and enhance urban development.

Regulation of Cost of Living in the Urban Cities

As a strategy to alleviate urban poverty in Nigerian cities, the state should regulate the cost of living and accommodation in the cities. Cost of living entails the cost of maintaining the standard of living in the society in such areas as food items, transportation, house-hold items, accommodation, health care, education, clothes, etc., and should be regulated to enable both the rich and poor afford them in the cities. This will reduce the socio-economic and political inequality between the rich and the poor and enhance the ability of the poor to afford the cost of living in the urban cities.

CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

From our exposition above, it is obvious that the challenges posed by rapid and unregulated urbanization of Nigerian cities are quite enormous. Urbanization, though unarguably delectable has however, led to the unprecedented drift of able-bodied men and women from the villages to the cities, and without any concerted effort by public officials to regulate this rural-urban drift, the result has been urban congestion and, as a corollary, slums, unemployment and underemployment, generating poverty and heinous crimes. Interestingly, these problems are so intertwined and mutually reinforcing, that isolating and resolving them requires commitment by government to invest in improving the welfare of the people. The study therefore recommends that the above strategies for poverty alleviation of urban poverty in Nigeria should be applied and monitored by relevant state agencies for effective functioning and improvement of the standard of living of the urban people. Hence, it is only when these policies and programmes which tackle the root cause of poverty in our urban centres begin to yield fruit that related security issues which threaten human existence in the cities can be said to be put under control. When this happens, the result will be accelerated security and development of urban cities in Nigeria.

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