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## **THE CONTEXT OF POVERTY IN BORNO STATE AND IT'S CHALLENGES TO SOCIO-DEVELOPMENT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Poverty is a worldwide phenomenon and has attracted much attention in recent years. People perceive poverty as a threat to the existence of human kind, unequal distribution of global wealth has exacerbated the problem of poverty in the developing countries. It is estimated that one third of the world population live in chronic poverty. Poverty has become so endemic that the great majority of the citizens have lost hope and faith and have started considering their conditions as a given, unchangeable act of providence since the more they individually struggle to redeem themselves from it, the more they plunge deeper into its abyss. Nigerian citizens are daily faced with many paradoxes and contradictions. The most traumatizing and obvious of these contradictions is their abject and squalor amidst to the tremendous amount of wealth they witness been displayed by members of the power elite. The objective of this paper is to examine the challenge of poverty in Northeastern Nigeria Particularly Borno State and attempt to proper solution to the lingering crises. Both primary and secondary data constitute the main sources for the study.*

***Key words:*** *Poverty, challenges of poverty, North-Eastern Nigeria*

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### **Introduction**

Poverty is one of the most profound problems being grappled with in Notheastern Nigeriathe northeasternNigeria, particularly Borno State. It has contributed substantially to the erosion and undermining of the foundations of peaceful coexistence and stable national development. This is paradoxical as it is clearly and inexplicable issue of poverty amidst plenty.

The northeast particularly Borno State have all the natural and human resources to rubbishrefute poverty, but ironically they are the hit, and ravaged and

rubbed by chronic and devastating poverty. The statistics are graphic and confounding. As much as 76 percent of Northeast are said to be living in poverty, earning an income of less than the equivalent of one American dollar a day. (Finance and Development, 2000)

Poverty in Northeastern Nigeria Borno for instance has great regional, sectoral, and gender disparities. The current shortages of staple food leading to high increase in prices of the most basic foodstuff are a warning about the severity of physiological/disjointed deprivation bare physical survival of the people. Apart from water, food is the most basic input for human survival; in addition human deprivation, income poverty and social deprivation have become aggravated. Poverty is a problem afflicting most people in the Northeastern states. It is considered as one of the manifestations of under development.

The poor in the Northeastern states particularly Borno State are still widely considered worse off as many indicators reflecting the ability to provide for physical subsistence for the upliftment or human dignity are below expectation. Thus poverty constitutes a threat to the growth, peace and security of Northeastern Nigeria, as well as the general standard of the Nigerian populace.

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

There is no commonly accepted definition of poverty. The concept of poverty has many faces often changing from place to place and across time and in the process has been described in many ways. However, in whatever way it is described, what is certain is that poverty is real. It is a plague affecting people all over the world. It has no geographical boundary; neither does it respect colour, tribe, race or religion.

Many people around the globe consider poverty as the inability to exercise control over their lives. Some old men in northern Nigeria say, if you want to do it, it is talauchi (FD, 2001). Poverty means working for more than 18 hours a day, but still not earning enough to feed or meet your basic needs. Limited resources force people to think in terms of every short term horizon. You can't think of the future because you can only see how to survive in the present.

The Encyclopedia Britannica (Encarta, 2000) defines poverty as a state of one who lack usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions, poor people are often forced to make difficult and agonizing choices. Feed the family or send children to school, buy medicine for a sick family member or

feed the rest of the family, take a dangerous job or starve. Poverty is said to exist when people lack the means to satisfy their basic needs. In this context, the poor are identified by determination to what constitutes basic needs these 'needs' are those necessary for 'survival' covering those who fall below the population as a whole in terms of nutrition, housing, clothing, health and education.

According to Encarta (2004), having adequate food can still place people as poor in the sense that "people without access to education or health services should be considered poor even if they have adequate food".

The United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) states that poverty is hunger, lack of shelter, being sick and not being able to see a doctor, not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time. Losing a child to illness brought about by water borne diseases. Poverty is powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom (World Bank, 1994, Poverty Net, 2004). The defining experiences of poor people involve higher limited choices and an inability to make themselves heard or to influence or control what happens to them. Powerlessness results from multiple, interlocking disadvantages which, in combination, make it extremely difficult for poor people to escape poverty.

According to (Uniamikogbo, 1977), the poor can be generally identified as:

- Those whose ability to contribute to the productive process is insufficient, such that their income cannot rise above the poverty line.
- Those who are unemployed.
- Those whose opportunities to participate in the productive process are hampered by discrimination of various kinds, ranging from sex, age, race and religious (Aluko, 1975: Edozien, 1975).

## **CHALLENGES OF POVERTY**

A challenge is something new and difficult which requires great effort and determination (Collins English Dictionary, 2017).

Poverty is a worldwide phenomenon and has attracted much attention in recent years. People perceive poverty as a threat to the existence of human kind. Unequal distribution of global wealth has exacerbated the problem of poverty in the developing countries. It is estimated that one third of the world population live in chronic poverty (Per et al, 2001).

Poverty has become so endemic that the great majority of the citizens have lost hope and faith and have started considering their conditions as a given, unchangeable act of providence since the more they individually struggle to redeem themselves from it, the more they plunge deeper into its abyss.

Nigerian citizens are daily faced with many paradoxes and contradictions. The most traumatizing and obvious of these contradictions is their abject poverty and squalor amidst to the tremendous amount of wealth they see been displayed by members of the country's power elite.

### **NORTH-EASTERN STATE**

North-Eastern State is a former administrative division of Nigeria. It was created on 27 May, 1967 from parts of the Northern Nigeria. The North-Eastern is also full of agriculture and food.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1976, the state was divided into Bauchi, Borno and Gongola States. Gombe State was later split out of Bauchi, Yobe State from Borno and Gongola was split from Taraba State and Adamawa State.

### **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES.**

Theoretical explanations for the persistence of poverty in Northeastern Nigeria are extremely varied and they have evolved over the years. They include the individualistic theory, the physical ecology theory, the political economy theory and the urban bias theory. Were these theories developed specifically in the study of poverty in the Northern states? Or are they generally theoretical connects found in academic discusses on the subject of poverty? But for the purpose of this paper, the political economy theory will be employed. This theory is linked to this study in view of the fact that the entire problems bedeviling Northeast could be viewed as a consequences of processes which concentrates wealth and power in the hands of few which in turn leads to not only poverty, hunger, but insecurity, backwardness and underdevelopment in the affected states.

The political economists under Marxian perspective sees poverty as a consequences of processes which concentrate wealth and power as the main cause of poverty. The political economy theorists argue that poverty is understood primarily in terms of economic forces, social relations, poverty rights and power.

People are poor because certain political, economic and social structures have been imposed on them that they have remained poor not as a matter of choice but as a matter of structural necessity. Kuren (1978) views poverty as deprivation. It is deprivation for the many and influences for the few. He regards poverty as “socio-economic” phenomenon whereby the resources available to society are used to satisfy the wants of the few while the many do not have their basic needs.

Rural poverty in the Northeastern states particularly Borno State is due to lack of access to education and unequal distribution of assets, particularly land. Some of the factors that could be used to explain the poverty situation in Northeastern Nigeria include: lack of access to resources (land and capital), unequal distribution of wealth/resources and power, exploitation of the rural dwellers by the local and urban elites, lack of alternative employment opportunities and lack of access to inputs and high cost of inputs (e.g. credit, fertilizer, land, labour), poor governance and corruption. Most of the factors listed above could be used to explain the prevalence of poverty in Northern Nigeria, Northeast in particular and they fall within the sphere of the political economy’s explanations of the causes of poverty. Though, other theories will also be adopted in the explanations.

### **CAUSES OF POVERTY IN THE NORTH EAST/BORNO STATE**

The causes of poverty in Northeastern Nigeria are well known to all Nigerians, and to some extent the rest of the enlightened world as well. Ridiculous as this might sound, but the solution to the problem is also known.

At independence in 1960, efforts to eradicate poverty in Nigeria centered more on education, something that was seen as the door opener to economic, technological and social development. As the late Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe, Nigeria’s first president at that time said “show the light, and the people will find the way”.

Then enter the oil boom in the 1970’s. Rising global oil prices boosted exports earnings from 4 billion naira in 1975 to 26 billion in 1980. GNP per capita also rose from \$360 to more than \$1000. But as oil prices began their downward descent, so did the nation’s export revenues. Growth turned negative and GNP per capita fell to \$370 in the 1980’s.

According to the Nigerian Federal Office of Statistics, in 1960 about 15% of the population was poor, but by 1980 this percentage had risen to 28%. By 1996,

the incidence of poverty in Nigeria was 66% or 76.6 million people. The UN Human poverty index in 1999 placed Nigeria amongst the 25 poorest nations in the world. Presently, it is estimated that two thirds of the 140 million or 180 million people that call themselves Nigerians are said to be poor. A very tragic situation, when one considers the fact that Nigeria has realized over \$600 billion in oil and gas revenues since independence.

A study conducted by Ali Garba (2006) indicated that in 1980, 38%, 36% and 32% of the people in the North-West, North-East and North Central respectively lived below moderate poverty line. In comparison, the southern part of the country was relatively less affected by poverty in 1980, as only about 13% of the people in the South-east and South-south lived below the poverty line. By 1985, however, poverty had become pervasive in all zones with the northern zones northeast in particular still maintaining the disproportionate share. The World Bank's Poverty Task Force identified the following as the main causes of poverty.

### **Infrastructure to Market Centres**

Infrastructures in Northeastern Nigeria are concentrated around the big cities. Highways do not seem to penetrate more remote areas. The vicinity to urban centres is also vicinity to market places. The remoteness of the northeast shows an infrastructural deficiency that correlates with the higher poverty incidence in the area. Improving infrastructure to connect remote districts to the market centres would therefore contribute to reducing poverty.

### **Poor leadership**

Since Nigeria's independence from the British in 1960 except for committed and visionary leaders like Sir Ahmadu Bello and Tafawa Balewa, most leaders of Northeast, just like their counterparts from the south has been corrupt, they lack vision, commitment and fear of God. Ranging from parliamentarians to Heads of State, Representatives, Senators and Governors, from Chairmen/Chairwomen, uniformed officers and ministers to elder-statesmen, including religious and traditional rulers all have shown themselves to be inept, greedy and corrupt. Indeed, everybody on whom leadership has been vested through whichever means has been a disappointment.

A leader is a selfless, visionary, dedicated, relentless, hardworking, kind and courageous person, who predicates his authority on the mandate freely given to

him by the people, and who is willing to relinquish it unconditionally when it expires. Such leaders inspire the people to make sacrifices towards achieving national development. And when a leader is upright and transparent, he rules by principles and outstanding personal example, but when he is dubious and corrupt, he rules by threat and coercion.

He treads on the heads of his people, burns the spirit of national consciousness and kills the urge for national sacrifice. The above description fits adequately the kind and nature of leadership that northern states in general and north-east in particular are confronted with. Most of the leaders have low moral character which manifest indiscipline's, corruption and lack of integrity. Consequently, general uncertainty is increased and economic incentives distorted. This will result in bad governance and mass poverty. According to the WORLD BANK (1992), bad governance has many features, among which are:

Failure to make a clear separation between what is public and what is private, hence a tendency to divert public resources for private gains.

Failure to establish a predictable frame work for law and government behaviours in a manner that is conducive to development, or arbitrariness in the application of rules and laws.

Exercise rules, regulations, licensing requirement etc. which impact the functioning of markets and encourage rent-seeking.

## **METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

**Sources of Data:** Both primary and secondary data were extensively used for this research. The primary data was collected from three states from the Northeast, that constitute Bauchi State, Borno State and Yobe State

A reconnaissance survey was conducted during which visits were made in some selected communities in the three states. Secondary data used. Documentary sources provided data from books, journals, articles, internet and other publications. Institutions such as National Bureau of Statistics and the Central Bank of Nigeria provided useful information for the research.

## **SAMPLE TECHNIQUE**

A sample of 300 respondents was interviewed from the three states. Different sampling techniques were used for the data collection. This include: purposive/accidental sampling and random sampling. The purposive/accidental sampling method was used to select the opinion leaders in the states and

communities to seek their views. The Stratified Sampling was adopted to make the work more representative in terms of differences in sex. Respondents from the different communities in the three states were selected by the use of Simple Random Sampling. A lottery method of Random Sampling was used.

### DATA COLLECTION

A reconnaissance survey was conducted during which visits were made to three selected villages in the state. The purpose was to have a closer look and familiarity with the three villages and to acquire practical knowledge about the villages. It was also meant to establish contact with the opinion leaders and to develop good relationship and confidence with the people. A survey was conducted and personal interviews were found to be the most appropriate tool for data collection in the study area, because most of the inhabitant were illiterates or semi-illiterates and therefore could not respond to the questionnaires effectively. Non-participant observation was also used to collect data on the poverty situation in the study area to beef up the data collected using the interview. The observation was unobtrusively done. This was to prevent a situation whereby the respondents would be aware that they were being observed to modify their behavior.

### DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data were statistically analyzed. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used.

### HOUSE SURVEY ON POVERTY IN NORTHEAST/BORNO STATE

TABLE 5.1: Sex

SEX	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
MALE	240	80
FEMALE	54	18
NON RESPONSE	6	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2007

TABLE 5.2: Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 25	28	9



<b>25 – 35</b>	98	33
<b>36-46</b>	122	41
<b>47-56</b>	32	11
<b>57-67</b>	17	5
<b>68 and above</b>	3	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2007

**TABLE 5.3: Level of education**

<b>Education status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Koranic</b>	48	16
<b>Primary</b>	129	43
<b>Secondary</b>	73	24
<b>Post-Secondary</b>	32	11
<b>Others</b>	18	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2007

**TABLE 5.4 OCCUPATION**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
<b>Farming</b>	106	35
<b>Trading</b>	48	16
<b>Civil Servant</b>	32	11
<b>Underemployed</b>	59	20
<b>Unemployment</b>	45	15
<b>No response</b>	10	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2007

Priorities those are inconsistent with development, thus resulting in a misallocation of resources. Excessively narrow base for, non-transparent, decision making. When these features occur together, they create an environment that is hostile to development. In such a situation the legitimacy of government of the people is eroded. This reduces compliance with decisions and regulations. Government tends to respond through populist measures like

divide and rule or resort to coercion. Either way, the economic cost tend to be high, as resources are diverted to internal security, while escalating corruption and massive poverty hold away.

### **INADEQUATE ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Most north easterners do not go to school. In a study conducted by IMF (2005), only about 30percent of the northeasterners go to school. Without proper education, access to employment opportunities becomes slim. In a study conducted by LTNDP (2005), the lower the level of education the higher the incidence of poverty. They equally observed that, the level of poverty within different educational groups increase between 1980 and 1996, and further found that households headed by those with no formal education had the highest consistent contribution to level poverty in Nigeria between 1980 and 1996. In other to ascertain this claim, a random survey of 300 respondents was conducted. The table above assessed the depth of poverty in the north by looking at some poverty indicators such as educational status, occupational status, health Nutritional status, Living conditions etc. All the results confirmed earlier claims that the north is actually in object poverty.

Table 5.1 to 5.4 are results of random households survey of 300 respondents within the study areas. Out of a total number of respondents table 5.1, 240 of 80 percent were male. 54.18 percent were female, about 2 percent of the respondents did not indicates whether they are male or female. The age distribution of the respondents shows that 9 percent were less than 25 years of age, majority of the respondents fall within the age bracket of 36-40 representing 41 percent, 98 respondents or 33 percent fell between 25-36 years. Table 5.3 shows educational status of the respondents. 48 or 16 percent attended Koranic schools, 129 respondents or 43 percent finished primary schools while 73 or 24 percent attended secondary school.

The low level of education in the northeast is a major cause of poverty. These young boys and girls who go through the Koranic school under tutelage of ‘Malam’ are not equipped with the capacity to aspire for further education or to be self-employed. Rather the young boys spend more time out of school and will eventually become drop out and nuisance to the society. This low level of education means that the youth in the northeast lack skills and knowledge that will equip them to participate actively in production and create wealth.

The employment profile in table 5.4 indicate that farming is the dominant source of employment in the northeast. 106 respondents or 35 percent are engaged in farming activities. This is followed by underemployed, these are respondents who believed that they have not reached their full potentials, various reasons were given as contributing to these problem from working full time to lack of finance or credit facilities to enable some of the respondents expand their businesses. 45 respondents that were unemployed status to bad government/ corruptions and the on- going reforms that are forcing government and the private sector to down size their labour force by laying off workers.

## **CONCLUSION**

For State to benefits adequately from rapid agricultural development, certain conditions must be met. The northeast are heterogeneous in nature. The poor are varied. There is need to know or understand the nature of poverty in these states. We also need to understand how micro-economic changes and policies can affect them.

There are three major ways in which policies affect the poor. These are through (a). Markets (b). Infrastructure (c). Transfer (Behream,1993). The market in which the poor participate are those for inputs (Labour and non labour) and finance (from formal and informal source).

Several important features of these markets can affects conditions in rural areas. The infrastructure that directly affects the rural sectors productivity and the rural poor quality of life includes the economic, (transport, communications, extension service, and irrigation) and the social (education, health care, water and sanitation). Given the fact that these infrastructures in the northeast are provided by government through public funding, it is therefore important to note that the level of spending, the cost effectiveness and quality of service and access of rural poor to these services have important on poverty alleviation.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The State government should come up with a more effective and efficient way of funding the social and physical infrastructure such that it will cost effective and of reasonable quality. The target group must be involved in the designing, implementation and monitoring of the project. There should be effective way of ensuring accountability and holding people responsible for their actions or inactions.

The poor need credits that is available on acceptable terms and at appropriate times. Recent experiment with community banks did not have its desired effect because the poor did not participate actively in the making of lending decisions. For the poor in the north to avail themselves of credits such credits programmes must involve the poor right from the designing through to the implementation stages. They should participate in the making of lending decisions.

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