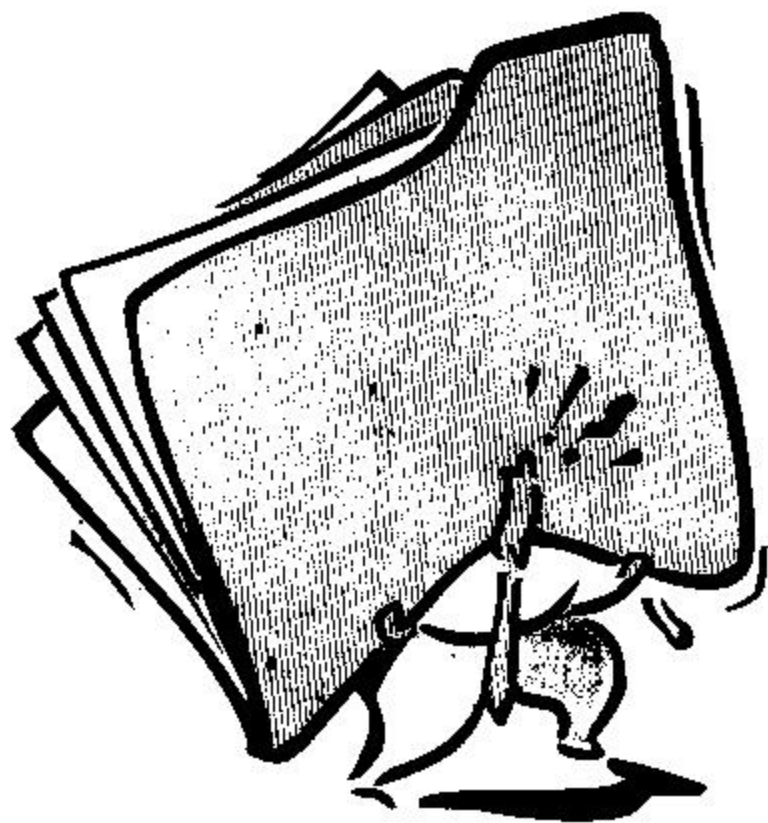


SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND SOCIAL WORK IN NIGERIA



Edited by:
Tayo Odumosu, Ph.D
Wole Atere, Ph.D
Funmi Adewunmi, Ph.D

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:Tayo Odumosu, Ph.D.

:Wole Atere, Ph.D.

:Funmi Adewumi, Ph.D.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE PROBLEM OF POVERTY AND INEQUALITY IN NIGERIA

By
OLAWALE SHABI

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on what poverty and inequality is, as well as various aspects of poverty. Various meaning and measurements associated with poverty and the extent of poverty in our society is examined. We identified who the poor are and various characteristics by which they could be recognised. Emphasis is also on the causes of poverty and the consequence thereof.

Moreover, it is argued that the poor have their own unique culture that are transmitted from one generation to another and as such, this perpetuate poverty. The functionality of poverty as a social problem based on the fact that it serves the interest of the rich is equally considered. Also, it is shown albeit briefly, how the social problem could be alleviated, if not totally eradicated in human society. Finally, it is argued in the paper that there is the need for a poverty alleviation strategies to drastically reduce the menace of poverty through suggested programmes.

INTRODUCTION

The word "poverty" and inequality implies an undesirable state. It suggests that individuals or groups who are in poverty need to be helped so that their situation is changed. Poverty, in other words, is a social problem.

Therefore, poverty and inequality are persistent even in societies with standards of living and productivity levels high enough to bring it to an end. At present, due to a high rate of unemployment there is an increasing number of the poor. However, *Encyclopaedia Americana* sees poverty as the insufficiency of means relative to human needs. Although there is disagreement on what these terms mean, it is generally accepted that at least half of the world's population and 19 percent of the United States population, are poor. More so, there is no single world-wide standard of poverty and such, no accepted count of the poor. But it is believed that from one half to two thirds of the world's people consume fewer than 1,500 calories daily and are regularly hungry. Most of these people live in poor countries, which represent two thirds of nation's of the world, WHO (1997).

The poor are viewed as a poverty is at least in part a problem of the distribution rather than the total amount of national income. By contrast, poverty in poor countries is taken to be the result of nation-wide causes, identified with economic underdevelopment. Consumption levels of most of the world's poor are believed not to have changed materially in more than two generations, while the number of poor increases constantly. Hence, since the average real income of the non-poor more than double each generation, the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' continually widens.

Having said this, it should be noted that any society in which there is inequality is bound to have poverty. In other words, if all those individuals with below average incomes were defined as poor, then the only way that poverty could be eradicated would be to eradicate all inequality in income. This is because if some people have higher than average incomes, inevitably others must fall below the average. Based on this, most sociologists who adopt a relative definition of poverty is to be reduced, but they do not believe it is necessary to abolish inequality altogether to solve this social problem. They argue that it is possible to establish a

minimum standard, a "poverty line", which might be below the average income. The poor can be defined as those whose income or resources fall so far short of the average within a society that they do not have an acceptable standard of living. Thus, it would be possible to have a society with some inequality where poverty no longer exists.

According to Douglas (1971) there are four aspects of poverty. The first is "lacking in material goods to the point of physical suffering from hunger, weather or diseases". Here, the emphasis is on absolute amount of material goods to meet the human needs of survival. This therefore justifies Galbraith (1969) assertion that poverty had virtually disappeared in our affluent society.

The second aspect of poverty is "lacking the material goods necessary to meet (agree upon) human needs of health". The criterion is any diet which medically produces less than adequate physical development. Housing adequate to maintain physical health is sometimes included, but the attention is on nutrition.

The third aspect of poverty is "lacking the material goods necessary to enjoy a descent standard of living". This is, therefore, the meaning behind the official poverty line of the Social Security Administration. Hence, it ties the meaning of poverty to an absolute physical or social standard. This led to the concept of "relative deprivation" popularised by Stouffer and Robert Merton. This relative deprivation "sharpens resentment and stirs revolt", Broom and Selznick, (1973).

THE MEANING AND MEASUREMENT OF POVERTY

Here, the competing definitions and measuring poverty is examined, with reference to the way these definitions have been used. Each of these definitions is hereby explained.

ABSOLUTE POVERTY

This involves a judgement of basic human needs and is measured in terms of the resources required to maintain health and physical efficiency. Most measures of absolute poverty are concerned with establishing the quality and amount of food, clothing and shelter deemed necessary for a healthy life. Absolute poverty, it should be noted, is often known as subsistence poverty since it is based on assessments of minimum subsistence requirement. It is usually measured by pricing the basic necessities of life, drawing a poverty line in terms of this price and defining as poor those whose income falls below that figure.

There have been attempts to define and operationalise the concept of absolute poverty. For example, Drewnowski and Scott (1981) in their "level of living index" define and operationalise "basic physical needs" in calories and protein; shelter measured by quality of dwelling and degree of overcrowding and health, measured by factors such as the rate of infant-mortality and the quality of available medical facilities. Some concepts of absolute poverty go beyond the notion of subsistence poverty by introducing the idea of basic human needs beyond the level of physical survival. Drewnowski and Scott include education, security, leisure and recreation in their category of basic cultural needs. The proportion of children enrolled at school is one indication of the level of educational provision; the number of violent deaths relative to the size of the population is one indication of security and amount of leisure and recreation. In general, absolute poverty is a condition of life so degraded by disease, illiteracy, malnutrition and squalor, that it prevents the individuals from realising his potential. This degree of poverty is a social liability which lies beyond traditional markets forces.

RELATIVE POVERTY

In the place of absolute poverty have developed the idea of relative standards, that is, standard which are relative to the particular time and places.

Thus, relative poverty is measured in terms of judgements by members of a particular society of what is considered a reasonable and acceptable standard of living and style of life according to the day. Just as conventions change from time to time and place to place, so will definitions of poverty.

Peter Townsend (1970) argues that, "individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the type of diets, participate in the activities and have the living condition and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged and approved in the societies to which they belong. Following this, their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities".

In a rapidly changing world definitions of poverty based on relative standard will be constantly changing. Thus, Samuel Mecher (1981) writes that "the argument for relative standards rests on the assumption that for practical purposes, standards become so fluid that no definition of need, no matter how broad, satisfies the ever changing expectations of modern life". In a nutshell, Rubinow M.I. (1976) puts it thus, "luxuries become comforts, and comforts become necessities". Thus, in Peter Townsend's words, any definition of poverty must be related to the needs and demands of a changing society. This explanation, therefore makes poverty inevitable by definition. Perhaps, the less problematic is relative poverty which is simply in terms of appropriate comparative group in the society. This is defined to include those who earn less than one third of the average per capital income in a country. In the case of Nigeria, although official statistics are scarce, indicators from the World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) sources point to a deterioration in the poverty situation. Per Capital Income plummeted from US \$990 in 1985 to US \$320 in 1992, compared with the overall low-income countries average of US\$390. In Nigeria, therefore, some 51 percent of the citizen are living below the poverty line. Many more Nigerians are falling below the line, due to the steadily worsening socio-economic situation.

SUBJECTIVE POVERTY

To the concepts of absolute and relative poverty can be added subjective poverty. This refers to whether or not individuals or group feel they are poor. Subjective poverty is closely related to relative poverty since those who are defined as poor in terms of the standards of the day will probably see and feel themselves to be poor. However, this is not necessarily the case. For example, a formerly wealthy individual reduced by circumstances to a lower-middle class income and life style may feel poor but other members of society may not regard him as such. Conversely, individuals and groups judged in terms of majority standards to be in poverty may not see themselves as poor. Thus, the SAP riots in many Nigerian cities in 1989 were due more to a growing intensity of poverty in our society.

THE INCIDENCE AND PREVALENCE OF POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

The incidence and prevalence of poverty varies greatly, depending on what definition of concept that is used. If we use a relative measure of poverty such as the below 50 percent of the median income, then the percentage living in poverty has been held steady for almost 30 years. Based on that, about 30 percent of our citizen are poor. If we adopt an inequality or share of income measuring indices, then poverty is widespread and have made no progress in the last 25 years. Meanwhile, a study carried out in Nigeria by FOS proportion of the

population in poverty in Nigeria fell from 43 percent in 1985 to 34 percent in 1992 from 36 million people (out of a population of 84 million) to 34.7 million people (out of population of 102 million) of those in poverty, 10 million people were extremely poor and of these 8.4 million lived in rural areas. The number of poor in rural areas fell sharply, from 26.3 million to 22.8 million, while those in urban poverty rose from 9.7 million to 11.9 million in the respective years. The reason for this is not far fetched because non-food requirements, i.e. social services including safe water, health and education facilities were inadequate in rural areas.

However, the mid-1970's statistics based on poverty line (point below which people may be said to be in poverty) consistently revealed that the incidence of poverty was significantly greater than small families in which the head was under 25 or over 64, and in large rather than small families.

Sixty percent of poor families lived in urban areas but the relative incidence of poverty was 50 percent greater in rural areas. Many poor people move frequently in and out of jobs and the labour force and the number affected by employment instability is far greater than the number unemployed at any given moment. In Nigeria today, there is rising incidence of poverty in the sense that, people live from hand to mouth and hardly can most families afford three square meals daily, people now opt for second-hand clothing materials and shoes, we now purchase second hand imported cars popularly known as "Tokunbo" and basic human needs such as food, housing among others can hardly be reached. It was prevalence of all these that necessitated the tagging of late M.K.O. Abiola's Hope 93 campaign effort under the defunct Social Democratic Party and Gani Fawehinmi's erstwhile National Conscience Party with a motto: "Abolition of Poverty". This to a large extent reflects the incidence and prevalence of poverty in the Nigerian Society. Since most people are marginalised, often deprived, cheated, used, deceived, discriminated against and so they are denied access to good and fulfilled life. More so, while some are stinking rich, and getting richer every day, some are very poor and are getting poorer, reflecting the persistent of inequality in our society.

At present, more than one billion people in the developing world continue to live in absolute poverty. The World Development Report 1990 estimates that this is the number of people who are struggling to survive on less than US\$370 a year or a day. Poverty is highly visible in most African countries. Overcrowded settlements in major urban areas without basic social services and remote and isolated rural areas are major concentrations of the poor. In 1993, an estimated 40 percent of the people in sub-Saharan African (SSA) lived on less than one dollar a day. At least Nigeria. As regards the depth, this has been found to be greater in Sub-Saharan Africa than anywhere else in the world (World Bank, 1996). One prominent characteristic of poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa is inadequate access to social services – also described as the lowest in the world. Bringing the discussion closer home, most Nigerians are to live a subsistence lifestyle, an indication of extreme deprivation. This has reduced government funding of capital and social projects. The persistent devaluation of the Naira, for over a decade under the IMF-imposed Structural Adjustment Programme, has adversely affected the quality of life of the average Nigerian. The ever-increasing hardship has become so entrenched that the three basic necessities of life: food, clothing and shelter are no longer taken as basic. As expected, this economic situation has bred urban squalor, crime and other anti-social activities throughout Nigeria. The effects of this biting poverty are certainly more pronounced on the children and their mothers who are compelled by circumstances beyond their control to eat less, thus exposing themselves to serious health hazards. However, the pervasive poverty in Nigeria do not appear to be abating as a result of spiraling inflation, massive layoffs of workers, rising food price, unaffordable health care and a deteriorating standard of education which have all contributed to worsening living conditions and the low income of households, whose members find it difficult to escape from the trap of poverty that has eaten deep into the fabric of our body social.

Those most vulnerable to poverty at present are the old, sick and disabled, the large family and single parent (usually fatherless) family, the unemployed and insecurely employed low-wage-earners. Firstly, the low paid or "the working poor", represent the largest group in poverty today since they receive wages below the official poverty line. More over, the problems of the low paid are further compounded by the fact that their jobs are also frequently less secured. They frequently work in declining industries lacking effective Union Organisation and political representation, so that their prospects of escaping the low pay treadmill are slim indeed.

Secondly, the elderly and the aged are particularly vulnerable to poverty. Since life expectancy has increased and earlier retirement has become more widespread in the twentieth century, the elderly have come to comprise an ever larger section of the poor. Thus, in a study by Abel Smith and Townsend (1965), almost half the age pensioners were living below the poverty line.

Thirdly, the sickness or disablement of one's parents, whether temporary or permanent, can have major implications for families near the poverty margin. In St. Ann's (1970) study, the sick and disabled constituted the fourth largest category of the poor.

In the fourth place, the large family remains vulnerable to poverty. The addition of subsequent mouths to feed merely compounds the problems and this remains true in Nigeria. Even the birth of more children throw low-income families into poverty.

Another poverty ridden category is the Single Parent Families. As such, the result of choice, death, desertion or divorce constitute a significant portion of the poor. Here, Coates and Ssilburn's study (1970) showed that many of the poor were those without a male bread winner, while Townsend's (1970) study found 10% of the poor belonging to Fatherless Families.

Lastly, people who are particularly unemployed are also vulnerable to poverty and hence, the prolonged unemployment for the breadwinners and their offspring is thrusting more and more families into poverty and tends to do so for many years to come.

While recognising the relative vulnerability of the above groups to poverty, it must be stressed that they do share one crucial common feature – their social class position. This is because the poor are an integral part of the working class and as such, poverty is the direct product of the general pattern of class inequality. As Miliband (1974) says, "old age, disablement, low pay, unemployment etc become synonymous with poverty in so far as those involved are members of the working class". Accordingly, people are counted poor when they are measured standard of living in terms of income or consumption is below the poverty line. Thus, the poverty has both income and non-income dimension, usually intertwined.

Essentially, the poor are those who are unable to obtain an adequate income, and a stable job, own property, or maintain healthy living conditions.

They also lack an adequate level of education and cannot satisfy their basic health needs Sancho, (1996). Thus, the poor are often illiterate, in poor health, and have a short life span World Bank, (1995). They have no access to the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing and decent shelter, are unable to meet social and economic obligations, they lack skills and gainful employment, have few, if any, economic assets, and sometimes, lack self esteem Olayemi, (1995). Very often, the poor lack the capacity to escape from their situations by themselves. This characteristics therefore, is what causes the social conditions of extreme poverty are pregnant mothers, the inhabitants of rural areas and marginal urban zones and those groups of people who have not been integrated into the society, especially certain ethnic groups who find themselves segregated in their own societies. It is suffice to mention the fact that among the groups most affected by extreme poverty throughout the world are those who do not have the capacity to organize themselves nor to exercise the right to protect their situation.

CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF POVERTY

People hold two basically different views of the causes of poverty namely that it is due to "circumstances beyond an individual's control" or to "lack of individual effort". Based on this, we can identify three main causes of poverty, the individuals, the culture or subculture of poverty, and the social structure Elash, (1973:359-73).

First, the individual has been seen as the cause of their poverty because the idea of individualism which persisted in every society fosters an attitude of every man for himself and produces a feeling that the losers of the race for success are not anyone's responsibility. Hence, both success and failure become individual matters. If one ends up in poverty it is his own fault. An individual is therefore poor because of playing the ponies, drinking laziness, or shiftlessness Lane (1962).

Also, Max Weber emphasizes salvation through individual effort virtue, and hard work and he believes that individuals have the power to achieve success through their own exertion, honesty, frugality and hard work. If he fails, he has no one but himself to blame. Behind his failure are the human weakness of intemperance, vice, idleness and other bad habits Messier, (1973). Therefore, the emphasis on the individual and on blaming the victim spawns stereotypes about the poor and welfare recipients.

The second causes of poverty is the culture or sub-culture of poverty. Here, emphasis are placed on the way of life of the poor. Such a culture system blocks any attempt of society to change the value, norms, beliefs and lifestyle of the poor. The "culture of poverty" concepts suggests that despite economic changes, the poor have remained so because of their culture. As Lewis (1961) puts it, it was a special culture that passes on poverty from generation to generation. As such, the lower-class culture and their assumed life styles are themselves identified as continued poverty Ryan, (1976). However, culture of poverty as an explanation of the causes of poverty eventually stereotypes the poor.

While the first two causes of poverty are widely accepted by conservation, larger segments of the public, and many politicians, the third causes of poverty- the social structure itself is more commonly accepted by the liberals, radicals and sociologists. Our social institutions especially our economy stack the deck against the poor. Therefore, our social institutions and even the welfare system are designed to cause and perpetuate poverty. We actually tolerate poverty because we do not want to change the social structure, values and norms that encourage or perpetuate it.

Our educational institutional institutions are not structured or designed to encourage poor children to learn or stay in school, thereby denying them adequate opportunities and avenues to become educated, hence they became or remain poor Ryan,(1976). More so, the advent of mandatory retirement age automated machine and new computers, as well as automated industry has made it increasingly difficult for the poor to find a job.

In view of the foregoing, there are a number of effects of poverty that are in turn causes of its persistence in individuals, families, and racial and other groups. Aspect of such so-called vicious circles of poverty include the following:

1. Less money is spent per pupil on schools attended by poor children who send fewer years in school, do less while there, and do not obtain a degree and diplomas essential to later job success.
2. The poor have less- nourishing diets and more birth defects, accident, disease and reported mental illness than others. They are also more likely to be alcoholic and narcotics addicts. As a result, they have higher absenteeism at work and school, lower energy levels, lower productivity and shorter lives.
3. Violent crimes such as assault, rape, homicide, and armed robbery, are committed by and against the poor people are more likely to be arrested (falsely or rightfully), less

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- 3 Violent crimes such as assault, rape, homicide, and armed robbery, are committed by and against the poor people are more likely to be arrested (falsely or rightfully), less

likely to be released pending trial, and more likely to receive stiffer sentences than the non-poor.

- 4 Another effects of poverty is that poor vote in much smaller numbers than the rest of society and they are poorly organized to influence government agencies.
- 5 Lastly, the poor people pay higher prices and interest rates and more frequently victimized in their purchases and that especially lower class members and other minorities pay relatively far more for housing.

THE CULTURE OF POVERTY

It has been noted that the life style of the poor differs in certain respects from that of other members of societies share common characteristics. The circumstances of poverty are similar, in many respects in different societies. Similar circumstances and problems tend to produce similar responses can develop into a culture, that is, the learned, shared and socially transmitted behaviour of a social group. This line of reasoning has led to the concept of a "culture of poverty" – a relatively distinct subculture of the poor with its own norms and values, perpetuated in part because the poor share a disorganised, unhealthy, incomplete and dysfunctional version of the middle-class culture surrounding them.

The idea of culture of poverty was introduced in the late 1950's by the American anthropologist, Oscar Lewis through his field work among the urban poor in Medico and Puerto Rico. To Lewis, the culture of poverty is a "design for living" which is transmitted from one generation to the next. As a design for living which directs behaviour, the culture of poverty has the following elements. In Lewis words, "on the level of the individual the major characteristics are a strong feeling of marginality, of helplessness, of dependence and inferiority, a strong present – time orientation with relatively little ability to defer gratification, a sense resignation and fatalism". On the family level, life is characterised by "free union or consensual marriages, a relatively little ability to defer gratification, a sense of resignation and fatalism". On the family level, life is characterised by "free union or consensual marriages, a relatively high incidence in the abandonment of mothers and children, a trend towards mother-centred families and a much greater knowledge of material relatives". On the community level, "The lack of effective participation and integration in the major institutions of the larger society is one of the crucial characteristics of the culture of poverty".

This culture of poverty is seen as a response by the poor to their place in society. To Lewis, it is a "reaction of the poor to their marginal position in a class-stratified and highly individualistic society". However, the culture of poverty goes beyond a mere reaction to situation. It takes on the forces of culture since its characteristics are guides to action which are internalised by the poor and passed on from one generation to the next. As such, the culture of poverty tends to perpetuate poverty since its characteristics can be seen as mechanisms which maintain poverty. To him, once established, the culture of poverty "tends to perpetuate itself from generation to generation because of its effects on children by the time such children are aged six or seven, they have usually absorbed the basic values and attitudes of their subculture and are not psychologically geared to take full advantage of changing conditions or increased opportunities which may occur in their life time."

The characteristics of culture of poverty are mechanism which maintain poverty and they include attitudes of fatalism and resignation lead to acceptance of the situation and failures to join trade unions and other organisations, thereby the weakening potential power of the poor. Lewis argues that the culture of poverty best describes and explains the situation of the poor in colonial societies or in the early stages of capitalism as in many Third World countries. Further to this, Michael Harrington (1963) in "The Other America" writes of the poor, "there is, in short, a language of the poor, a psychology of the poor, a world view of the poor. To be impoverished is to be an internal alien, to grow up in a culture that is radically different from the one that dominates the society".

THE FUNCTIONS OF POVERTY

It may sound cynical to speak of poverty as having functions for a society, but many sociologists believe that a very good way to analyse why a seemingly undesirable situation continues to exist is to look at its functions or outcomes. It is possible for a society to have a vested interest in poverty. Therefore, Herbert Gans (1978) in "more equality" argues that "poverty survives in part because it is useful to a number of groups in society". Poverty benefits the non-poor in general and the rich and powerful in particular. Hence, they have a vested interest in maintaining poverty. For them, poverty is not a social problem. From this perspective, Gans outlines the following "functions of poverty" for the non poor.

1. Every economy has a number of temporary, dead-end, dirty, dangerous and menial jobs. The existence of poverty ensures that such work is done. Therefore, poverty functions to provide a low-wage labour pool that is willing or rather, unable to be willing to perform dirty work at low cost. Without the low paid, many industries would be unable to continue in their present form. Thus, poverty ensures that "dirty jobs" are done and by getting them done cheaply, subsidises the non-poor sections of the population.
2. Poverty directly provides employment and financial security for a fast growing section of the labour force. This is based on the fact that poverty creates jobs for a number of occupations and professions that serves the poor or shield the rest of occupation from them. This includes the police, probation officers, social workers psychiatrist, doctors and the administrators who oversees the "poverty industry". According to Gans, those employed to deal with the poor have a vested interest in poverty.
3. Lastly, the presence of the poor provides reassurance and support for the rest of society. They provide a baseline of failure which reassures the non-poor of their worth. Gans claims that "poverty helps to guarantee the status of those who are not poor". It does this by providing a reliable and relatively permanent measuring rod for status comparison. Since they are relatively powerless, the poor also provide an effective scapegoat for the non-poor. Hence, the poor function to reinforce mainstream norms since norms "are best legitimated by discovering violations". Gans concludes that poverty persists because many of the functional alternatives to poverty would be quite dysfunctional for the more affluent members of society.

SOLUTIONS TO POVERTY AND INEQUALITY PROBLEM

In solving the problem of poverty, programmes should be designed at the national level to explicitly correct the social, occupational and psychological deficits of people born and raised to a life of poverty. Going by this, steady and well paying job opportunity should be created for the poor. In addition with this, job training programmes and education in general can help to equip people for positions that are available in order to improve the lot and quality of life of the poor and subsequently bring about reform to re-socialise the poor and their presumed deficiencies in order to foster initiative determination and instil "work habit" as well as remove the presumed effects of poverty. This is because studies have shown that most people would rather work than draw welfare. Wright and Wright, (1975).

Secondly, to counter the culture of poverty at an earlier age, government must pump money into schools in low-income districts with the aim of raising educational standard. As such, an extensive programme of pre-school education for the children of low-income families intended to nip the culture of poverty in the bud should be embarked upon, with the aim that they will imbibe middle-class culture and eventually rise from their poverty.

Thirdly, since poverty is recognised as an aspect of inequality and not merely a problem of the poor, the social structure of the society as a whole should be restructured. This is because the self-interest of the rich and not the culture or behaviours of the poor has been the

main obstacles in proffering solution to poverty. This was confirmed by Gans when he argued that "the prime obstacle to the elimination of poverty lies in an economic system which is dedicated to the maintenance and increase of wealth among the already affluent".

Fourthly, social security benefits should be improved so that millions of elderly people just below the poverty level would no longer (technically) be poor. Hence, in Nigeria where there is no social security system, efforts should be made to put it in place to at least reduced the incident and prevalence of poverty within our society.

In addition, tax loop holes for the rich should be closed so that the income may be more adequately redistributed through the federal tax system, to benefit the low and moderate income families. This is based on the fact that, one way to alleviate poverty would be to raise personal exemptions so that no one in the poor or near-poor category would owe an income tax.

Moreover, there must be attributes of accountability, transparency, responsibility and participation in the exercise of power and daily administrative responsibility in managing a country's human and economic resources. This is because there is now a growing belief that good governance must be part of the strategy of raising living standards. Where accountability is lacking and corruption siphons resources meant for development, especially on the welfare of the poor. Hence, greater transparency reinforces accountability and responsibility. Without the three, the conduct of public policy tends to be plagued by alienation, suspicion and social discontent. But its presence increase equity by involving the poor and other groups in the planning and implementation of projects and programmes.

CONCLUSION

Above all, the aforementioned solutions to problems of poverty and inequality are not suggested to totally eradicate poverty, but to provide opportunities so that people could achieve their own escape from poverty.

Since it is hoped to provide the poor with the opportunity to become upwardly mobile. In the light of the devastating nature of poverty in Nigeria today, there is the need for a new poverty alleviation initiative to reduce the miseries of the poor significantly. Such an initiative should be founded on a well articulated and targeted poverty alleviation programme which takes cognisance of the imperatives of respectable economic growth, employment generation, access to resources, basic needs and social services, and good public service management. For poverty reduction, economic measure is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. For growth to be an effective strategy, it has to be accompanied by a deliberate policy of redistribution. In Nigeria, where the incidence of poverty has remained high in spite of growth and the existence of a number of poverty related programmes, targeted efforts are required to induce broad-based growth and provide social services and infrastructures aimed at reducing the depth and severity of poverty across the country.

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