

POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT *The study analyses the Poverty Alleviation Programmes as an alternative to Peace and Conflict Resolution in Northern Nigeria; it links the frequency of Conflicts (insecurity) in the region the incidence of absolute and abject poverty. The study predominantly utilized secondary data. In the final analyses, it is shown that conflicts in the region are traceable to poverty. The study concludes that, peace, stability and security is the foundation for achieving the socio-economic development; therefore, preventing conflict, resolving conflict and for peace to be built, poverty has to be alleviated or eradicate the poverty tension that breeds ground for conflict, which requires a genuine commitment for poverty alleviation programmes and involvement of constituents people at every level—design, implementation and monitoring of poverty reduction programs.*

KEYWORDS: Poverty, Conflict, Peace, Conflict Resolution, Ethno-religious, Insecurity

INTRODUCTION

Conflict exist in all human societies and at every level of society as social interactions and relationships are prone to swing from agreement to disagreement which results in disharmony and in some cases, tension and antagonism. As such, conflict is inevitable in human and organizational relations and will naturally occur with the passage of time. Darby observed that,

Conflict is neither good nor bad, but intrinsic in every social relationship from marriage to International diplomacy. Whenever, two or more people are gathered, there is conflict or potential conflict. The real issue is not the existence of conflict but how it is handled (1995:25).

This implies that, societies are always in either a state of conflict or that of peace thereby indicating that they cannot exist without experiencing one or the other. Conflict and the search for peace are as old as human societies. However, human societies, since creation have frowned at conflicts in all their manifestations which invariably has necessitated the desire and search for peace and security (Onoja, 1998). Therefore, one of the most enduring quests in all known human societies becomes the search for peace, order and stability. Human beings are concerned about the effects and consequences of wars, conflicts and rancour on their lives and on the society in which they live. For this reason, individuals and societies have sought methods and devised institutions aimed at achieving conflict-free existence or, failing that, mitigating the effects of conflicts from spreading and escalating when they do occur.

In general, the foregoing scenarios suggest that although conflict is inevitable the World over, Africa illustrates a case of a continental terrain where the magnitude of conflict, its dimension and consequences threaten peace and development. The increasing tide of social conflict is a pointer to the fact that a systematic study of how it can be resolved becomes necessary.

Northern Nigeria has experienced armed conflict in recent decades. In the last decade, the majority of conflict-related deaths and injuries in Nigeria have occurred in this region and large numbers of people continue to suffer from insecurity and fear of violence. The conflict and war experienced is intimately related to the well-known challenges of poverty, bad governance and weak states in the region. Conflict, armed violence and insecurity devastate economies, societies and families and they are associated with distorted political economies of violence in which predators enrich themselves to the detriment of the majority. Moreover, conditions of poverty and marginalisation contribute to risks of conflict. Therefore, a study of how to manage or resolve conflict and ensure peace in Nigeria as in any other country is a welcome development. This paper focuses on Poverty Alleviation Programmes as an alternative to Peace and Conflict Resolution in Northern Nigeria.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study will assist all stakeholders to have a deeper appreciation of the role of poverty alleviation as an alternative to conflict resolution in Northern Nigeria. The research would provide alternative strategies to be adopted by the policy makers and various communities based on their needs and aspirations in order to address the problems of conflict collectively and squarely in the northern region.

The study also serves as foundation for future researches on similar or related topics especially those that focus on peace and conflict resolution in Northern Nigeria. And also provides theoretical insights on poverty alleviation and its impact on peace and conflict resolution in the Northern Nigeria..

CONCEPT FRAMEWORK

Concepts are very important in the analysis and interpretation of social phenomenon and events; as they aggregate social phenomena and gives meaning to it in simple, logical and systematic way. Central to this study are the concepts of Peace, Conflict, Conflict Resolution and Poverty.

Peace

The concept of peace generally refers to absence of violence, war or dissension (Rummel, 1981 and Francis, 2005). Thus, Rummel noted, peace is “conceptually opposed to violence, antagonistic conflict, such as that manifesting threats and accusations, hostile quarrels, angry boycotts and riotous demonstration” (1981:11). According to Rabie, “peace is a situation generally characterized by the absence of war and violence in which human interactions are conducted in an orderly manner and disputes arising from such interactions are settled peacefully” (1994:13). Peace, according to Danton (1963) denotes a situation of tranquillity in, and with all of nature (in Best, 2002).

It can be deduced from the above that, the central feature of peace is the absence of any real or imaginary tension, threat, hostilities or discord that could create disharmony among

individuals, groups or nations leading to instability, confrontation, violence or war. The aim of peace and any peace building initiative is to bring about trust, tolerance and confidence among and between the conflicting parties such that the root causes of the conflict are eradicated. According to Best:

Peace building, like any building at all, is a process, which recognizes that certain concrete effort and processes are required to be made by individuals, groups and communities for conflict to be reduced to a minimum level, and for a peaceable society to be achieved. Peace thrives on justice, fairness, equity, trust, friendship, mutual respect, communication, a common aspiration and similar elements. As such, it is often said that peace is not merely the absence of conflict, but also the presence of justice (2002:270.)

Conflict:

The conflict results from disagreement, disharmony and an antagonistic relationship between individuals, groups and communities. Conflict according to Marx (1937) is perennial and an ingredient towards the actualizations of individual and group objective. On his view Deutsch (1973) conflict exists whenever incompatible action (or inaction) occurs which tends to prevent, obstruct or interfere with, in addition to injuring or rendering another action or inaction ineffective. For Chaplin, conflict can be defined from the tendency of human beings to become antagonistic, particularly when they are faced with irreconcilable or opposing views. He stressed that “conflict is simultaneous occurrence of two or more mutually antagonistic impulse or motives” (1979:109). In similar sense, Janowitz sees conflict as a social phenomenon “derives from a clash of goals, both personal and social” (1970: vii).

For Coser (1966):

Social conflict may be defined as a struggle over values or claims to scarce status, power, resources in which the aim of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals. Such conflict may take place between individuals, between collectivities, or between inter-group as well as intra-group conflict are perennial features of social life (in Otite, 2001:2).

Generally, conflict usually occurs in one way or the other as a result of the scarcity of resources in plural societies which makes peoples interests and goals to clash.

Conflict Resolution:

Conflict Resolution refers to the processes ending conflict. Conflict resolution refers to strategies that eliminate the sources of the conflict—and, optimally, that find the best outcome for all involved. Other terms used somewhat interchangeably with conflict resolution include “dispute resolution,” “alternative dispute resolution,” and “external dispute resolution.”

Conflict resolution emerged as:

As alternative way of resolving rather merely pacific settlement of disputes as a reaction to the limitations imposed by realist

approaches to conflict analysis, management and resolution
(Burton, 1990:33).

Conflict Resolution emphasizes the total and permanent resolution of conflict, establishing a lasting peace through the resolution of contending issues. Thus conflict resolution is both an analytical and problem-solving approach to conflict and its resolution.

Poverty

A review of the massive literature on poverty shows that there is no standard concept or definition of poverty because of its multidimensional nature as well as its dynamic properties. Poverty is not just an economic condition, it is a human condition.

Poverty being a multidimensional in nature entails lack of adequate livelihood assets and failure to achieve basic capabilities in nutrition, health, economic and social life, etc. In recent times, (Adebayo, 2009) notes that, there has been the tendency to see poverty as a consequence of deprivation; lack of skills and good health; and social/economic exclusion mechanisms, including lack of access to active involvement in community's life in all its ramifications. This view, thus, essentially opines that, the conceptualized of poverty covers both the primary basic needs (food, clothing, shelter) and the secondary basic needs (economic, social, and cultural rights, liberty, freedom, property rights, access to productive assets and employment, etc) of man, the lack of which lead to a state of want, powerlessness, helplessness, despair and inability to protect oneself against economic, social, cultural and political discrimination, deprivation and marginalization (Deng' 1995).

In an attempt to widen the conceptual base in the analysis of poverty, scholars like Kankwenda have sought to see the issue of poverty beyond income earning. He thus, posits that, poverty is:

A multidimensional phenomena influenced by wide range of factors; these include poor peoples' lack of access to income earning and productive activities and to essential social services (health, education, safe water) (2000:3).

Walton (1990), also, sees poverty as a multidimensional concept. it embraces undesirable conditions such as inadequate income, malnutrition, lack of access to social services and lack of social and political status. Olayemi (1995) maintains that, the poor have no access to the basic needs of life such as food, clothing and shelter and are unable to meet social and economic obligations. They also lack skills and gainful employment as well as self-esteem.

Against this backdrop, therefore, one calls to mind what is referred to as the Human Development Index (HDI) which is a parameter for measuring and indeed assessing a country's population's access to such facilities or services like education, health, transportation, balanced nutrient, etc, in addition to income. These conceptions have revealed that poverty means a great deal more than the level of income or mere access to social services. Therefore, poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon that is both a state and a process (Edoh, 2003). Kankwenda, has corroborated this view by describing poverty as:

...a state of deprivation or denial of the basic choices and opportunities needed to enjoy a decent standard of living; to live a

long, healthy constructive life and to participate in cultural life of the community (2000:64).

This definition is not far from what the Copenhagen Declaration of 1995 holds as constituting the phenomenon of poverty. Poverty, to the Declaration;

Has various manifestations including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihood: hunger and malnutrition; ill health, limited or lack of access to education and other basic services, increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environment, social discriminations and exclusion. It is also characterized by lack of participation in decision and in civil, social and cultural life (cited in Alimika, 2001:3).

This indicates that poverty is being unable to meet basic material needs, encompassing food, water, clothing, shelter, education, health as well as basic non – material needs including participation, identity, and dignity among others. The widespread poverty is ravaging and destroying the psyche, the physical existence, the health, business, freedom, security, political participation, education, not the least the democratic governance we are currently forging in the country.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are a number of theoretical and empirical studies that have established the link between poverty and conflict. To investigate Poverty Alleviation Programmes as an alternative to Peace and Conflict Resolution in Northern Nigeria, the Relative Deprivation Theory is adopted in this study. This theory was propounded by Dollard et al (1939). This theory was propounded as part of efforts to link socio-political and economic inequalities in the society to rebellions and insurrections. As individual and group- based theory of aggression, the relative deprivation theory argues that when expectation outstrips achievement regardless of the absolute levels of economic consumption or the provision of political rights, frustration is generated. Thus, the collective frustration turns to anger and violence (Dollard et al, 1939:52, Davies, 1962:44, Feierabend and Feierabend, 1966:89).

By application, this theory assists us to trace the historical antecedence of conflicts, agitations and frequent rise of individuals and groups against the Nigerian government. From the standpoint of the assumptions of Relative Deprivation Theory, it can be argued that the abysmal failure of the Nigerian government to addressing critical challenges to development in many parts of the country may be responsible for the internal insurrection by armed militia groups against the state.

It can equally be argued further that, there are conflict and instability in Nigeria because people are denied not only their biological needs, but also psychological needs that relate to growth and development. The overriding importance of this theory is that it understands that needs, particularly basic needs (such as food, water, shelter and health) unlike interest cannot be traded, suppressed, or bargained for; thus any attempt to do this, leads to conflict. According to Aristotle, social strife and revolutions are not brought out by the conspiratorial or malignant nature of man, rather revolutions are derived from poverty and distributive

injustice. Therefore, when the poor are in the majority and have no prospect of ameliorating their condition, they are bound to be restless and seek restitution through violence.

In Northern Nigeria the case is that of absolute poverty. This means that lack of basic needs (like food, clothing, shelter and health) in the region is the seed of conflict. Conflicts are therefore often caused by an attempt to clamour for these basic needs by violent means. North, as a volatile mix of poverty and conflict has continued to be poorly developed. Thus, as long as absolute poverty remains in the North, conflict is inevitable.

POVERTY INCIDENCE IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

Nigeria with more than 160 million people and nearly 350 ethnic groups, speaking 250 languages with about 50 per cent Muslim, 40 per cent Christian and 10 per cent indigenous sects (Johnson, 2011) is very poor. Despite the fact that Nigerian economy is paradoxically growing, the proportion of Nigerians living in poverty is increasing every year (NBS, 2010). Indeed, over 70 per cent of the population is classified as poor, with 35 per cent living in absolute poverty (Kester, 2012).

The poverty level in Nigeria is that it portrays a tale of regional disparities. According the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the regional poverty disparity can be appreciated in table below:

Zone / Regions	Food Poor	Absolute Poor	Relative Poor	Dollar Per Day
North - Central	38.6	59.5	67.5	59.7
North - East	51.5	69.0	76.3	69.1
North - West	51.8	70.0	77.7	70.4
South - East	41.0	58.7	67.0	59.2
South - South	35.5	55.9	63.8	56.1
South - West	25.4	49.2	59.1	50.1

Source: NBS National Poverty Profile, January, 2012

The table above shows that, poverty levels are higher in the Northern regions of the North-East, North-West and North-Central areas of Nigeria compared to the Southern regions. According to the table, about 59% of people in the North-Central (areas of Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau State) are absolutely poor, 69 per cent of the people living in the North-East (areas of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe State) are absolutely poor with less than 1 dollar income per day, equally, 70% of the people in the North-West (areas of Kaduna, Katsina, Kano, Kebbi, Sokoto, Jigawa and Zamfara State) are absolutely poor with less than 1 dollar income per day.

Undoubtedly, this has undermined and challenged the peace and security of the country. Unarguably, the crisis, conflicts and insurgency in the Northern region has been aggravated by systemic worsening and intolerable level of poverty in Nigeria.

CONFLICTS IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

The African continent over the past three decades, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s has faced greater challenges to stability and progress in all ramifications than ever before (Ikejiaku, 2009). Nigeria has experienced uncountable ethno-religious and communal

conflicts. Like other parts of the continent, it had its share of violent ethno-religious and communal conflicts. The Northern Nigeria in particular has been experiencing a plethora of conflicts endangering the regional peace, order development over the last three decades. In the region from 1980s, discrimination, poverty, and struggle for the control of economic power and ethnic diversity have led to conflicts of different dimensions in northern part of the country; this includes:

- Adamawa State (Maitatsine uprising Yola, 1984; DUMO ethno-religious conflict, 2002-2003; Numan conflict of 1986-1988; Numan riot and deposition of Homa Bachama; Series of Boko Haram attacks 2010-2013)
- Bauchi State (Tafawa Balewa conflict of 2000-2001; Ethno-religious conflict, 2001; Sharia conflict 2001; Series of Boko Haram attacks 2010-2013)
- Benue State (Zaki- Biam massacre, 2001; Attack on Hausa community, 2001; Ipav-Ukan crisis, 2001; Tiv-Jakun conflict, 2002; Oturkpo political conflict, 2002; Political conflict in Kwande LGA, 2004;
- Borno State (Maitatsine uprising Maiduguri, 1982; 1980Biu ethno-religious conflict, 2000; Danish cartoon riot, 2006; Series of Boko Haram attacks 2010-2013)
- Gombe State (Maitatsine uprising, 1985; Book launch and ethno-religious conflict, 2001;
- Kaduna State (Maitatsine uprising, 1982; 1987 conflict engulfing Kafancha, Kaduna and Zaria; 1992 Zangon Kataf conflict; Phases 1 and 1 sharia crisis, 2000; Bajju-Ikulu ethno-religious Conflicts, 2001; Boko Haram crisis, 2010 to date)
- Kano State (Maitatsine uprising, 1980; 1999-2000 Kano disturbances; ethno-religious conflict, 2001; Afghanistan – US ethno-religious Conflict, 2001; Jos Reprisal Ethno-Religious conflict, 2004; various Boko Haram attacks 2010-2013)
- Kebbi State (Ethno-religious conflict Jega Town, 2004; Shite-police conflict in Kebbi, 2004)
- Kogi State (The Idoji and Idozumi intercommunal conflict Okene, 2001; Local Council creation conflict Okene, 2002; Kabba Buna inter-communal Conflict Kabba, 2004)
- Kwara State (Oodu'a People's Congress Ilorin, 2000;
- Nassarawa State (1995-1999 conflicts in Toto and Obi; Conflict between Kwale- Tiv tribes, 2001; Azara-Tiv conflict Nasarawa, 2001; Tiv militia attack on Angwan-Tashi, 2001)
- Niger State (Emir of Suleja conflict, 2000; Kontagora L.G polls Conflict, 2004; 2011 Boko Haram bomb blast in Suleja, Christmas Day bombing in Madalla)
- Plateau State (Wase-ethno-religious conflict, 2001; Quaan Pan ethnic conflict, 2001; Quaan Pan LG conflict, 2001; Spillover of Wase conflict to Langtang, 2001; Jos Jumaat prayer conflict, 2001; Jos North LG council conflict, 2001; PDP LG congress crisis, 2002; Fulani-Beron conflict in Barkin-Ladi, 2002; Houses vs Taro ethno-religious Conflict, 2002; Jumaat prayer conflict in Dilimi Barlom, 2002; Ado ethnic crisis, 2002; Wuse-Ethno religious conflict 1 and 2, 2004; Fulani-Taro conflict over cow theft, 2004; Hausa-Fulani against indigenes conflict, 2004; Yelwan-Shendam, 2004; various Boko Haram attacks 2010-2013)
- Sokoto State (Sharia riot in Sokoto, 2000)
- Taraba State (the 1990-1992 and 1999-2002 conflict of Wukari and Takum; Kuteb- Chamba sectarian conflicts, 2001; Fulani-Mambila, conflict 2002)
- Yobe State (Assault on Igbos Potiskum, 2003; 2004; Series of Boko Haram attacks 2010-2013)
- Zamfara State (Bukuyum conflict Fulani herdsmen and Ruku Dawa farmers, 2002). (Sani, 2007; Usman, 2003; and Various Nigerian Newspapers).

All these conflicts have contributed to the state of underdevelopment of the region. Thus, there has been loss of lives, livelihoods, destruction of infrastructure and natural resources,

employment opportunities, interrupt economic activities, frightened off investors, weakens social network and a decline in the capacity of the state to provide services such as health, education and indeed security for the people. In a sentence, the peace and security and indeed wellbeing of the people of Nigeria has been seriously compromised.

POVERTY AND CONFLICT IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

Poverty is a multidimensional problem that goes beyond economics to include among other things, social, political, and cultural issues. Scholars have been trying to develop a theoretical approach to poverty and conflict for a long time; that poverty as a result of lack of human needs lead to reactions that result in conflict. However, there are a number of empirical studies that have established the link between poverty and conflict. These studies show that poverty, inequality, scarcity of resources and external economic forces all combine to have a destabilizing impact on political stability. The economic explanations have received much attention on the causes of civil wars in developing countries, The prominent studies in this field include Elbadawi (1992) *Civil Wars and Poverty*; Keen (1998) *The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars*; Collier (1999) *Doing Well Out of War*; Collier and Hoeffler (2000) *Greed and Grievance in Civil War*; Easterly and Gatti (2000) *What Causes Political Violence*; and Berdal and Malone (2001) *Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*.

A strong association is found between high levels of conflict and multidimensional poverty. For example, between 1997 and 2006, nearly 40% of low human-development states globally were found to be affected by armed conflict, compared with less than 2% of high and a third of medium human-development states (Ploughshares, 2007). This is significant because African countries are prone to conflict. In 2006 Africa, with 13% of the global population, had over 40% of the world's violent conflicts; eleven countries were affected directly (Ploughshares, 2007).

A cursory look at some of the hot spots in Africa will reveal that there is a very high correlation between poverty and conflict. In Sudan for instance, the acute poverty of the South compared with the North, as well as the feeling that the Northern-based government was exploiting the region's resources, without any returns to the region, contributed to the outbreak of conflict in 1983 (Copson 1991). Similarly, in Angola and Mozambique, the resentment of the rural people toward urban elite of partly mixed-race that controlled economic and political power contributed to the emergence of conflict in the two countries. Some analysts are of the view that the participants in many of Africa's violent demonstrations and wars in recent years have been moved by the poor economic conditions under which they live (Draman, 2003). Copson, for instance argues that when guerillas join a rebel group, they may obtain food and clothing as well as opportunities for recognition and advancement that are normally unavailable to them in an urban slum or a farming community. This seems to be what is playing out in West Africa, where the numerous rebel movements have become sources of opportunity for unemployed young men. And sadly, the region is slowly being engulfed by what many describe as a regional war.

According to Aristotle, social strife and revolutions are not brought out by the conspiratorial or malignant nature of man rather revolutions are derived from poverty and distributive injustice. Therefore, when the poor are in the majority and have no prospect of ameliorating their condition, they are bound to be restless and seek restitution through violence. No government can hold stability and peace when it is created on a sea of poverty (Okanya,

1996). In Africa the case is that of absolute poverty. This means that lack of basic needs (like food, clothing, shelter and health) in Africa is the seed of conflict. Therefore, people in most cases react negatively to such situation, in order to show their grievances and discontent. Conflicts are therefore often caused by an attempt to clamour for these basic needs by violent means. Thus, as long as absolute poverty remains in Africa, conflict is inevitable.

The period since the 1980s has been spectacular for many African societies as the harsh economic conditions of the people have resulted into an upsurge of internal crises. The period proved there is a symbiotic relationship between poverty and internal conflicts in these societies. The Nigerian experience to a large extent and that of Northern Nigeria in particular, fits into these characterizations as the country has witnessed ‘Civil War, ethnic, regional, religious class, political and communal conflicts that have taken a major toll on national development.’ (Kwanashie: 2005:110). Therefore, people’s abject poverty in the midst of plenty not only alienates but could generate hatred (Elaigwu, 2005:73). In Jega’s words:

Mass poverty and unemployment served to condition the minds and attitudes of Nigerian and made them susceptible to elite manipulation and mobilization of negative identities. As the state becomes unable to satisfy basic needs of the people, they in turn withdrew from the sphere of the state into ethno-religious and communal cocoons, with heightened sensitivity to the roles of the “others” in their marginalization and immiserations (Jega, 2004:54).

Nigerians are hungry for progress and an improvement in their lives, but northern Nigerians feel this need most acutely. Life in Nigeria for many is tough, but across the North, life is grim. A UN study shows that poverty in the most northern states is nearly twice that of the rest of the country. The health indicators reflect this. Children in the far north are almost four times as likely to be malnourished. Child mortality is over 200 deaths per 1000 live births, leading to lower life expectancy. Educational standards are just as bad. Literacy in the far north is 35 per cent as opposed to 77 per cent in the rest of the country. Seventy-seven per cent of women in the far north have no formal education, compared to only 17 per cent in the rest of the country. In northern Nigeria, primary school attendance is only 41 per cent, while youth unemployment is extremely high. All of this contributes to joblessness and a deepening cycle of poverty (Carson, 2012:2).

From the foregoing, it can be asserted that life is generally threatened by absolute and abject poverty; these realities are much more obvious in Northern Nigeria. It is therefore unarguably that poverty is a major cause of frequent occurrence of ethno-religious, political conflicts and insurgencies in the region.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The socio-economic development in any society cannot be achieved in the midst of insecurity and conflicts, because of the direct implications for peace, stability, security and development. Prosperity and peace in Nigeria can only be achieved when the local, state, regional and national dimensions of the current crisis are addressed. Conflict in Northern Nigeria is a consequence of poverty, for peace to be built, poverty has to be alleviated or eradicate the poverty tension that breeds ground for conflict. The study recommends a

genuine reform of poverty alleviation programmes for improving living conditions and infrastructures, increase transparency and government accountability to the people and the programme should also create the necessary space at the local level to solicit the views of their constituents (the poor) who should be involved at every level—design, implementation and monitoring of poverty reduction programs.

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