**Names of Author:**
**Egharevba, M.E. (PhD), Iruonagbe, T. C. (PhD), Azuh, D. E. (PhD), Chiazor, A. I. (PhD) and Suleiman, B. M.**
**Institutional Affiliation**
Covenant University
Department of Sociology and Department of Economics and Development Studies
Km. 10 Idiroko Road
Ota, Ogun State
Nigeria.
Email: matthew.egharevba@covenantuniversity.edu.ng
tunde.iruonagbe@covenantuniversity.edu.ng
dominic.azuh@covenantuniversity.edu.ng
idowu.chiazor@covenantuniversity.edu.ng
barnabas.suleiman@covenantuniversity.edu.ng

# POVERTY, INEQUALITY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: APPRAISING THE NON-ATTAINMENT OF THE MDGs

Abstract
The challenge of the 21st century has been how to confront and reduce widespread inequalities and poverty. This remains the core of development problems that underline the principal objective of development policy as embodied in the Millennium Declaration. Despite significant improvements over the past 50 years in advancing human well-being, extreme poverty and inequities remain widespread in the developing world. The world today is characterized by vertiginous accumulation of wealth by a few to the exclusion of larger majority who suffer untold hardship and impoverishment. These conditions have been exacerbated by the adoption of free market paradigm anchored on private accumulation. This has engendered an overlap of all types of injustice and social polarization that now define the basis for social life in most countries of the world, including Nigeria where 70 percent of the population lives below US$ one dollar a day. As an exploratory study, secondary sources of data were engaged to interrogate the policy of market fundamentalism and the manifestations of inequities it has engendered. The paper argued that the lack of access to essential goods and services for a dignified human existence, the unevenness in the distribution of incomes and fruits of economic growth, as well as constraints in the access to power, self-esteem and freedom coupled with the prevalence of ethnic, religious, gender differences and orientations have generated violence, unrests, war, terrorism and deepen social conflicts- which reinforce the conditions of growing social inequality. The paper further proposed a restructuring of the present one-size-fits all model of social relations of economic globalization to one which require closer economic cooperation, where people and countries collectively act together to solve their common problems of trade, capital and environment. Besides, there is need for international financial institutions such as the World Bank/IMF to respect national sovereignty, allow each country to make appropriate decisions that will shape and strengthen the process of nation building and better quality of life. In all, decision-making about economic globalization must be democratic and recognize that economics is not zero-sum, but one about transforming the lives of people.

Keywords: Exclusion, Human Development, Inequality, Poverty, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

## INTRODUCTION

It is globally accepted today that improving the quality of life of all people is critical to achieving sustainable development. Thus, building partnerships across the world in order to create an equitable and sustainable development that ensure respect for human rights, the rights of women, ensuring universal access to education and health, including sexual and reproductive health are critical for transforming global relations in the world. Whether world leaders conscientiously subscribe to this vision of promoting human lives and human rights brings to fore the interrogation of issues of poverty and inequalities and the challenges they pose for promoting human development. Addressing these concerns, therefore, provide the basis for appraising the extent to which nations around the world particularly the developing countries seek to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) targets particularly those of reducing poverty, hunger, and inequality.

Thus, Nigeria, Africa's nominally biggest economy is seen as a study in copious paradoxes in this context. Though the country is endowed with rich natural and human resources, majority of the citizenry live in poverty and misery, and lack the capacity to do things they would want to choose to do or be in life (World Bank, 2006; Nigerian Economic Outlook, 2015). The nation which was one of the richest 50 countries in the 1970s has retrogressed to become one of the 25th poorest countries at the threshold of the 21st century. This is despite being the sixth largest exporter of crude oil from which she has earned over US$300 billion over the last three decades of the twentieth century (World Bank, 2010). Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) target is all the more challenging for Nigeria as the poverty situation in the country is much more precarious for many Nigerians than any time in recent past (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2013). Since the country was part of the global community that subscribed to the setting the MDGs in 2000 to reduce global extreme poverty and hunger by half in 2015, the scorecard for the country in terms of halving extreme poverty and hunger, including promoting people centred development. While some progress has been made in some areas such as increasing school enrolment, marginal reduction in maternal and child/infant mortality, the overall impact in terms of meeting the MDG targets have not been significant given the high poverty rates that has not abated in spite of the cited rapid economic growth rate of 7% which the nation has experienced over the last decade (World Bank, 2013).

Almost fifteen (15) years down the line, available data reveals that the number of the populace living below the poverty line of US$ 1.25 dollar has risen from 52 percent in 2004 to 61 percent in 2010, and 69 percent in 2014, life expectancy is less than 52 years, over 10 million children are out of school, infant/child mortality and maternal mortality is one of the highest in the world after China and India, and unemployment has reached 24 percent (NBS, 2015). Besides, the Gini Index for Nigeria is 50.6 percent which shows a large unequal income distribution between the rich and the poor, indicating that the benefits of economic growth have not been equitable and broad based. For instance, the total income earned by the poorest 20 percent is 4.4 percent and those earned by the richest 20 percent of the population is 55.7 percent (CIA World Factbook, 2009). Also, the National Bureau of Statistics (2012) revealed that "the top 10 percent earners were responsible for about 43 percent of total consumption expenditure. Similarly, a look at the country's Human Development Index (HDI) ranking since 1990 has not been encouraging too, as the country has continuously been classified as a nation with low Human Development Index ranking (a composite measurement of literacy, life expectancy and income) in terms of its citizens' standard of living.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the country is faced with challenges of poverty, inequality and human development which ultimately undermine the nation's quest for socioeconomic development. This is so because the whole essence of development entails creating human freedom which involves the emancipation of people from alienating material conditions of life, and from social servitude to nature, other people, misery, oppressive institutions and dogmatic beliefs, especially that poverty is predestination. Freedom here, involves an expanded range of choices for societies and their members with a minimization of external constraints in the pursuit of some social goals of sustenance and self-esteem. It also encompasses various components of political freedom, including, but not limited to personal security, the rule of law, freedom of expression, political participation and equality of opportunity (UNDP, 1992: 20, 26-33; Sen, 1999:14). As such, when the people of any given society fail to meet their life-sustaining basic human needs and well-being, a condition of helplessness, misery, poverty, inequality, and insecurity sets in and underdevelopment become the order of the day. Thus, human development becomes jaundiced when people do not have the material means to help them realize their full potentials, and address other socioeconomic challenges such as poor infrastructure, poor education and health conditions, inadequate housing, poor sanitation and unemployment.

These conditions raises the critical questions regarding identifying what factors are responsible for the continuous incidence of poverty, inequality and poor human development in the developing world with specific reference to Nigeria. Also, what impact does a country's socioeconomic policy play in advancing social and economic development or in exacerbating poverty, inequities and unequal income distribution in Nigeria? Here, the neo-liberal economic policy of market fundamentalism is interrogated to determine what impact it has played in the country's pursuit of the MDGs, and in addressing the incidence of poverty and inequities in the country since its adoption in the early 1980s. Also, it is essential to examine the role of the state and governance/leadership in the attainment of the MDGs. This is vital since the state represents the custodian of power where key decisions are made on economic, social and political issues that influence the quality of human life, social equality, and the attendant consequences associated with it. Addressing these issues will help us to gauge the progress the country has made in attaining the MDGs target over the last 15 years, what factors has stalled the attainment of the goals and what should constitute the most critical issues in the whole make-up of the MDGs for Nigeria.

## POVERTY, INEQUALITY AND MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA

> "Our primary goal in development must be to reduce the disparities across and within counties…. The key development challenge of our time is the challenge of inclusion" (James D. Wolfensohn, former president, World Bank).
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> "The unfinished business of the twenty-first century is the eradication of poverty" (Juan Somavia, United Nations World Summit for Social Development, 1995)

Providing understanding on the subject of poverty, inequality, human development and the MDGs is significant in appraising the Nigeria's performance in the pursuit of Millennium Development Goals initiative. Thus, the elimination of poverty, creating employment opportunities and lessening income inequalities constitute the necessary conditions for development. Development, therefore, is about the sustained elevation of an entire society and social system toward a better life. Therefore, meeting the fundamental human needs of sustenance, self-esteem and freedom represents the common goals sought by all individuals and societies (Goulet, 1971:23). Development is both a physical reality and a state of mind in which society has, through some combination of social, economic, and institutional processes, secured the means for obtaining a better life. To secure this better life, development in all societies must have at least attained the following three basic objectives:

1. To increase the availability and widen the distribution of basic life-sustaining goods such as food, shelter, health, and protection.
2. To raise the levels of living, including in addition to higher incomes, the provision of more jobs, better education, and greater attention to cultural and human values which not only enhance material well-being but also generate individual and national self-esteem, and
3. To expand the range of economic and social choices available to individuals and nations by freeing them from servitude and dependence not only in relation to other people and nation-states but also to the forces of ignorance and misery (Todaro and Smith, 2009: 22; 2015: 24).

Be that as it may, a key message fully acknowledged by scholars and development experts in interrogating poverty, inequality and human development issues and its associated challenges today is that economic growth does not automatically translate to human development progress. Pro-poor policies and significant investments in people’s capabilities- through a detailed focus on education, nutrition and health, and employment skills-can expand access to decent work and provide for sustained progress (UNDP Human Development Report, 2013). Furthermore, as the global development challenges becomes much more complex and transboundary in nature through globalization which has engender the interconnectedness of countries through trade, migration, and information communication technologies, the need for coordinated action on the most pressing challenges of our era, whether they be poverty eradication, climate change, or peace and security is essential. The crises of recent years- food, financial, climate- which have blighted the lives of so many points to the reality that policy decisions in one place have substantial impact elsewhere, and thus emphasize the importance of nations collectively working to reduce people’s vulnerability to socioeconomic shocks and disasters.

In the light of this, poverty is a serious issue in Nigeria as many people are struggling daily for survival. It has been recognized as a social problem that commands the attention of scholars, governments, civil society organizations and international development institutions. Poverty is a multidimensional problem, embedded in a complex and interconnected political, economic, cultural and ecological system which is apparent in the Nigeria’s context. This fact clearly underlines the various definition of poverty. Poverty, therefore, entails a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information (World Social Summit, 1995; World Bank, 2005). The UNDP human development report (1998) sees poverty as inadequacy and deprivation of choices that would enable people to enjoy decent living conditions. Yunus (1994) conceived poverty as the denial of human rights relating to the fulfillment of basic human needs. The Organization for Economic cooperation and Development (OECD) (2001) described poverty as an unacceptable human deprivation in terms of economic opportunity, education, health and nutrition, lack of empowerment and security. The World Development Report (WDR) (1999) and the World Bank (2007) opined that conditions could be expressed as poor if people live on per capita income lower than US$ 370 dollar at any given time, or as been extremely poor by living on less than US$ 1.25 dollar per day, and moderately poor by living on less than US$ 2 dollar daily. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) (1999:1) sums up the definition of poverty as:

> A state where an individual is not able to cater adequately cater for his or her basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter; is unable to meet social and economic obligations, lacks gainful employment, skills, assets, and self-esteem; and has limited access to social and economic infrastructure such as education, health, portable water, sanitation and consequently has limited chances of advancing his or her welfare to the limit of his or her capabilities.

From the foregoing, it is clear that poverty refers to the inability of people to meet economic, social and other standard of well-being. Human well-being, here, means being well in the basic sense of being healthy, well nourished, or highly literate and more broadly, as having freedom of choice in what one can become and can do (Sen, 1985; 1999). Also a broader interrogation of the nature of poverty and inequality problem goes beyond just economic poverty and inequalities in the distribution of income and assets to include inequalities in power, prestige, status, gender, job satisfaction, degree of participation, and freedom of choice. This is significant in the sense that like most social relationships, we cannot really separate the economic from the non economic manifestations of inequality (Watts, 2003). Each reinforces the other in a complex and often interrelated process of cause and effect. From the economic perspective, they both imply material deprivation due to low income, lack of basic necessities of life. From the social context, poverty and inequality manifest in terms of social inferiority, low status, lack of dignity, insanity, vulnerability and social marginalization. Politically, poverty and inequality is manifested in lack of political power, exclusion from decision making and denial of basic natural, human and political input (Idakwoji, 2002).

**HUMAN DEVELOPMENT ISSUES AND MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA**

The concept of human development currently encapsulates the very essence of contemporary development which centres on people's well-being as the ultimate of all that is development. Human centred definitions of development emerged in the 1990 and focused on people becoming the agents of development as well as its means and its end. Here, people must be responsible for deciding what development is and what values it is to maximize, have ultimate control of public policy and decide how to proceed with social transformation and every other major common concern. People become the means of development when their energies and resourcefulness is the engine that drives development such that the pursuit of self-reliance becomes the core value and onerous responsibilities of all. Finally, people are the end of development when their interest and well-being is the measure of all things, the supreme law of development (Ake, 2003:87; Egharevba and Chiazor, 2013). Similarly, the UNDP (2010) defined human development as expanding capabilities and enlarging the choices people have to live fulfilling lives. Human development entails conditions under which individuals can flourish, meet their basic needs, make choices about their lives and make progress in their own development free from structural or other constraints. Human development has encouraged a focus on the poor and the prioritization of capability enhancing services (such as food, security, education and health). It justifies a multidimensional conceptualization of human well-being and poverty (Qizilbash, 2006). From the above, it is obvious that a more people-centred approach to development still remain a serious challenge in Nigeria as reflected in the poor quality of life of the citizenry. While Nigeria may boast of high economic growth rate over the last decade, the benefits of this growth is not expressively seen in the people's living conditions as millions of Nigerians are trapped in conditions of poverty, unemployment and high inequality as earlier presented.

Furthermore, since its formulation in 1990, human development report has consistently laid emphasis on democratic processes and institutions as well as the promotion of human rights based approaches such as equality, non discrimination, public participation, accountability, transparency, rule of law and social inclusion as critical elements for achieving sustainable human development (UNDP, 2010). While human development is measured using the UNDP Human Development Index (a combined measure of life expectancy, literacy and income), sustainability indicators uses indices such as organic water pollution, emission, fossil fuel energy consumption, $CO_2$ emission, ecological footprint (consumption, production and bio capacity and calorie intake (total and animal calorie intake per year). The strategies promoting human development have traditionally emphasized investing in education and health and promoting equitable growth. These are two pillars of development that mobilize individual agency by strengthening productive capabilities. The third pillar is to promote participation through democratic governance. A cursory look at the attainment of these three pillars in Nigeria clearly depict why we have failed to successfully meet up with the MDGs target)

Democratic governance, therefore, means that people have a say in the socioeconomic and political decisions that affect their lives and that they can hold decision makers accountable. It further entails that the rules, institutions and practices that govern social interactions are inclusive and fair; that women are equal partners with men in private and public spheres of life, that people are free from discrimination based on race, ethnicity, class, gender or any other attribute, and that the needs of future generations are reflected in current policies. It also mean that economic and social policies are responsive to people's needs, and aspirations, eradicate poverty and expand the choices that all people have in their lives, and that human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected. The foregoing discourse help to properly situate the emergence of the MDGs initiative as a global development agenda set by the United Nations in 2000 and the politics that underlie its formulation including its attendant challenges for developing countries. The MDGs eight (8) goals emerged from the Millennium Summit in New York where 189 member states adopted the Millennium Declaration, including pledging their commitments to poverty eradication, development and protecting the environment. The MDGs focus the efforts of the world community on achieving significant, measurable improvements in people's lives by the year 2015, both for the developing and developed countries. In 2007, the monitoring framework used to measure progress towards the MDGs was revised to include four new targets which replaced the previous version which had been effective since 2003. The eight MDGs commonly accepted framework for measuring development efforts and progress include:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a Global Partnership for Development.

As with all social policies, the MDGs initiative is also characterized with its benefits and challenges, including those who support its formulation and those who oppose it. As described by Bill Gates (cited in Sachs, 2012), the MDGs have become a type of global report card in the fight against poverty for 15 years. As with most report cards, they generate incentives to improve performance, even if not quite enough incentive for both rich and poor countries to produce a global class of straight-A students. The MDGs were targets mainly for poor countries, to which rich countries were to add their solidarity and assistance through finances and technology. The MDGs formed the fulcrum on which development policy is based by creating public awareness, mobilization, advocacy and continuity on what national and global development should be based. They represent the means to a productive life and a linchpin to the quest for a more secure and peaceful world. Meeting the goals for hunger, education, gender equality, environment and health is vital for overall economic growth and development. Some of the benefits which the MDGs has engendered is that it has increased pressure on national governments particularly in poor countries to generate quality and reliable data on human development which helps to increase opportunities for evidence-based policy making. The MDGs has also increased the number of opportunities for politicians and activists to publicly address the issue of global poverty, increased the awareness of people in rich countries about global poverty and helped raise political profile of global poverty and impact on public opinion and political party policies.

On the other hand, studies have also shown reasons why the MDGs will not be met particularly for the developing world by outlining their drawbacks. White and Black (2004: 16) point out that the goals suffer from diminished effectiveness because accountability for meeting them is diffuse. The build-up to the Millennium summit created a once in a lifetime, perhaps once in a century opportunity to engineer a transformation in the relative prioritization that the international community in all its guises (G7/8, G20, OECD, UN etc) allocates to reducing poverty. Regrettably, this potential, but unlikely transformation did not occur and so the pursuit of global poverty reduction returned to a long-term strategy of gradualist progressive change. A critical drawback of the MDGs is the failure of rich countries to live up to their end of the MDG bargain of providing financial assistance/aid towards the pursuit of the goals by developing countries. It is regrettable to note that holding of meetings by key leaders of developed nations under the auspices of G7, G8 in New York (2000, 2005 and 2008), Gleneagles (2005), Monterrey (2007), and other venues till date have not been matched by budgets and policy changes to progressively advance the lot of countries in the developing world. The MDGs began as a review of development policy by the Development Assistance of the OECD (1996). From the beginning, the MDGs were linked to the need for greater donor financing. In early documents the major aid agencies stated bluntly: "Development costs money…. the high income countries need to supply more aid" (OECD, United Nations, World Bank and IMF, 2000: 23). The Monterrey Consensus of the United Nations (2002) proclaimed that "a substantial increase in ODA and other resources will be required if developing countries are to achieve the internationally agreed development goals (United Nations, 2002). For instance, the contribution of 0.7 percent of rich countries GDP in development aid to help finance the MDGs in development were never met by the rich countries. The 8$^{th}$ development goal commits rich countries to allow greater trade access, reduce debts and increase aids. However, rich countries have not being more favourably disposed to developing countries, notably with respect to their interventions in agricultural markets.

In many other ways, the MDGs were the outcome of a fragmented conversation between critics of neo-liberalism, loosely grouped around the idea of 'human development' and non-fundamentalist neo-liberals moving toward a post-Washington Consensus. The MDGs emerged at a time when; 1) the previously dominant model for world development, neo-liberal capitalism was being heavily questioned as failing to deliver on its promise on spreading the benefits of economic growth and reforms to the poor, and 2) the pressure on world leaders particularly those who championed the neo-liberal policies and multilateral institutions to generate a vision of how the world would be different and better in the new millennium (Hulme, 2009). Another set of challenges associated with the MDGs was the issue of social inclusion-or put more simply, fairness in the world's economies. As the world has been stumbling through intense period of globalization since the 1980, together with the advent of the digital age, inequalities in income have generally soared. Gaps in earnings between workers with higher education and those without have widened sharply. The wages of highly educated and well trained workers have grown substantially, whereas earnings of lower skilled workers with fewer years of education have tended to decrease. The fragility of gainful employment for large parts of the world's labour force, in both rich and poor countries, have contributed to increased public unrest and even toppling of governments in the past few turbulent years, with more unrest expected. Of course, the increased inequality caused by differences in educational attainment adds to longstanding inequalities in other dimensions. The goal of gender equality between men and women, boys and girls (MDG3) has not yet been met worldwide, even though some progress has been made on girls' school enrolment and women's participation in politics and business. Minority groups (ethnic, religious, racial) continue to endure hardships in most countries particularly in Africa. Long standing discrimination against indigenous population is stark and in many places intensifying as scramble for jobs, water and arable lands increases. Youth also find themselves aggrieved as technological advances is threatening the access of many people to good jobs rather than enhancing it.

It is also essential to note that many of the world's poorest countries have often shown lack of interest in the MDG formulation and implementation processes. A great number of leaders in the developing countries lacked the political commitment to meet the MDGs. Developing countries lacked the capacity to spend effectively the sum required to fund the MDGs and many are unlikely to meet the 'minimum governance thresholds' to achieve the goals (The UN Millennium project, 2005:240). Many of them believe that they will achieve the 'best deals' at the national level through bilateral negotiations with trading partners (in the past USA and USSR but recently China and India) and aid donors rather than through UN processes. Their relationships with the IMF and World Bank, over loan conditionalities and Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme (PRSP) and PRS approval, are much more important than those engendered at the General Assembly. Global agreements at the UN are a public good that are unlikely to deliver significant additional resources and/or more favourable treatment to individual nations in the near future. For instance, during the period of MDG formulation (1998-2001) the main interest of developing countries focus was on the need for goals from rich countries (more aid, more debt relief and fairer trade). Notably India was more concerned that the goal set in 2000: A Better World for All (a joint IMF, OECD, UN, World Bank document) made no commitments about rich countries contributions to global poverty reduction.

While the idea of human development provided general support for UN conference and associated declarations it promoted two specific theoretical strands that became underpinnings of the MDGs. First, it advanced the case that development strategies needed to directly pursue the goals of development, and not just the means. Human development provided an overarching conceptual framework for arguing that education and health improvements and gender equality were not only good in their own right but essential components of the pursuit of a dynamic vision of development. As such, five and a half of the eight MDGs are about enhancing human capabilities. Secondly, a list of multiple goals was essential for any serious development effort based on rigorous thinking. While the process behind the placing of items on such lists involved complex interactions-involving ideas, empirical evidence, political interests and personal values-human development provided a well reasoned case for multi-dimensional lists that promotes capabilities. However, interests operating through the power of material capabilities and institutions moderated the influence of human development on the MDGs. For instance, while the IMF actively participated in activities that finalized the 8 goals and has renamed its key products to align with the MDGs (i.e. poverty reduction and growth facility), there is little evidence that it actively advanced the MDGs or that its actions or culture have been impacted by the MDGs. This ambivalence was also manifested when Nigeria negotiated her debt relief in 2005, where the country's finance minister, Dr. Okonjo-Iweala remembered Kofi Annan saying that the country could only be considered sustainable if it could finance the MDGs; … we were told not to mention the word 'MDGs', that it was not the concern of the Paris club (Okonjo-Iweala, 2006: 5-57).

## NEO-LIBERALISM AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

> What is economic growth if it is not translated into the lives of people?
> -UNDP, Human Development Report, 1995

In a world of plenty, so many people live in poverty and misery particularly in developing countries with serious consequences on their quality of life. While development is a complex phenomenon, its ultimate success requires long-term thinking and planning with regard to promoting robust growth marked with affordable better healthcare, accessible qualitative education and less inequality (Stiglitz, 2007:15). Since the essence of economics is choice, it presupposes that there are alternatives, some of which benefits some groups (such as foreign capitalists) at the expense of others; some of which imposes risks on some groups (such as workers, the poor, and vulnerable persons in society especially women and children) to the advantage of others. And where there are alternatives and choices in life issues, it presumes that democratic processes should be at the centre of decision-making which takes serious cognizance of the issues of social justice, income inequalities, poverty, and human deprivations amongst others when socioeconomic policies of government are being adopted and implemented. Thus, in proffering the way forward in addressing the challenges of development in most developing countries particularly Africa, it is critical to find the right balance between the government and the market rather than the one-size-fits-all measures crafted by most International Financial Institutions such as the World Bank/IMF and others.

The degree to which countries worldwide are concerned about issues of poverty and inequality as well as the enormous cost of not dealing with the problem; the social consequences, including alienation, violence and social conflict associated with it is critical for our examination. This goes to tell a lot about who to entrust with key aspects of economic decision-making and policies which most times reflect their political interests and cultural values and the consequential impact these decisions and policies may have on people's well-being (Egharevba, Iruonagbe and Imhonopi, 2015). In 2014 Nigeria rebased its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 1990 to 2010 and became the largest economy in Africa with an estimated nominal GDP of USD 510 billion, surpassing South Africa's USD 352 billion. Nigeria has maintained an impressive growth over the past decade with a record estimated 7.4 percent growth of real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2013, up from 6.5 percent in 2012 (UNDP, 2014). In spite of this feat, the country still faces the challenge of making its decade-long sustained growth more inclusive as the benefits of economic growth have not sufficiently trickled down to the poor. Poverty, unemployment, inequality and uneven income distribution between the rich and the poor still remain prominent among the major challenges facing the country. The country continues to be hampered by an infrastructural deficit, especially in the energy supply and transportation, and underinvestment in human capital. Nigeria's ranking according to Human Development Index has not improved significantly over the years. With 0.471 in 2012, Nigeria's score is below the 0.475 average for Sub-Saharan Africa.

However, the country's efforts toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals have however yielded only marginal results despite the nation's huge resource endowment. The infant mortality rate reduced from 126 to 78 per 1000 live births in 1990 and 2012 respectively, maternal mortality rate fell from 1100 to 630 per 100,000 live births in the same period. The proportion of deliveries with skilled attendants rose from 38.9 percent in 2008 to 53.6 percent in 2012. The government implementation of the Universal Basic Education Programme introduced in 1999 has led to an increase in enrolment in primary schools. While enrolment is important, the rate of completion is of great concern and somewhat worrisome. According to UNESCO's Education for All Monitoring Report 2012, Nigeria has an estimated 10.5 million children still out of school and 26 percent of those enrolled do not complete the primary cycle. Nevertheless, 72.1 percent of the population falling within the ages of 15 to 24 years is literate. Funding for the education sector remains low. The share of the nation's budget for education fell from 12.2 percent in 1985 to 8.5 percent in 2013, 17.5 percent points lower than the UNESCO-recommended share of 26 percent. This contradict the position of the World Bank (2013) African Competitiveness Report which observed that education remained one of the most powerful instruments for reducing poverty and inequality, including laying the foundation for sustained economic growth. Although the Gini Coefficient improved from 0.488 in 2010 to 0.397 in 2011, there is still a broad gap between the rich and the poor, owing amongst others to differential access to infrastructure and amenities.

The burgeoning size of the poor and its attendant social ills on society calls for serious attention to be focused on the group. This is critically so as inequality among the poor represent a critical factor for understanding the depth of poverty and the impact of market economic policies on the poor. For instance, extreme income inequality leads to economic inefficiency. With high inequality, the smaller the fraction of the population that qualifies for a loan or other credit and this invariably affect their overall rate of savings as well as their capacity to adequately educate their children or start and expand a business, and the overall rate of savings in the economy tend to be lower (Todaro and Smith, 2009: 222-223). Besides, income disparities undermine social stability and solidarity; facilitate rent seeking, including actions such as excessive lobbying, large political donations, bribery and cronyism. When resources are allocated to such rent seeking behaviours, they are diverted from productive purposes that could lead to faster growth. Similarly, high inequality makes poor institutions very difficult to improve, because those with few money and power are likely to view themselves as worse off from socially efficient reform; and so they have the motive and means to resist it. High inequality may also lead the poor to support populist policies that can be self-defeating. For instance, countries with extreme inequality have undergone upheavals or extended civil strife that have cost countless lives and set back development progress by decades (i.e. Iran, Iraq, Syria, the Arab Spring, and Nigeria in the North East). And with high inequality, the focus of politics often tends to be on the redistribution of the existing pie rather than on policies to increase its size.

This condition calls for the urgency to interrogate the link between neo-liberalism and development in determining incidence of poverty, inequality and human development challenges with specific reference to Nigeria. Development entails a condition in which people can meet their basic needs for existence and live an improved quality of life. Development can be viewed from political, economic and social dimensions. Accordingly, Sen (1999:3) provided a useful theoretical and empirical formulation of development "as an integrated process of expansion of substantive freedoms that connect with one another". He identified five distinctive types of freedom, seen in an instrumental perspective as "(1) political freedoms, (2) economic facilities, (3) social opportunities, (4) transparency guarantees, and (5) protective security; concluding that, freedoms are not the primary ends of development, they are also among its principal means." He further opined that, focusing on human freedoms contrasts with narrower views of development, such as identifying development with the growth of Gross National Product (GNP), or with the rise in personal incomes, or with industrialization or with technological advance, or with social modernization. While growth of GNP or of individual incomes can, of course, be very important means to expanding the freedoms enjoyed by members of the society, freedom depends on other determinants such as social and economic arrangements (for instance, facilities for education and health care as well as accessibility to them), political and civil rights (which includes the liberty to participate in public discussion and scrutiny (Sen, 1999:3).

This fact was also corroborated by Guolet and others that argued that at least three basic components or core values should serve as a conceptual basis and the practical guidelines for understanding the inner meaning of development. These core values include: sustenance, self esteem and freedom. Here, freedom should also encompass various components of political freedom including, but not limited to, personal freedom, the rule of law, freedom of expression, political participation and equality of opportunity (Guolet, 1971:23, UNDP, 1992; Wall Street Journal, 1997). Therefore, while development is about improvement in the quality of life of people, economic development is a necessary condition for the attainment of this goal. As such, rising per capita incomes, the elimination of absolute poverty, greater employment opportunities, and lessening income inequalities therefore constitute the necessary but not the sufficient conditions of development (Sen, 1983). In this context, development can be driven through conscious, consistent, progressive and enduring policies of government.

With respect to examining the concept of neoliberalism as a global economic order, contemporary scholars continue to pay much attention to studying various aspect of globalization phenomenon, including its origins. Although explanations which favour single seemingly evident factors, such as the growth of international trade or technological development, still remain popular, there is the growing recognition that globalization has a complex multi-causal nature with socio-political set of factors possibly playing more important role than many believe (Quiggin, 1999). One popular view of globalization stresses the role of policy choices associated with a broad program of neoliberal reforms. This explanation implies that globalization must be perceived as the international manifestation of the general shift towards market-oriented neoliberalism. The new tendency has brought about the growth of unregulated international capital markets, which occurs in parallel with "… the shift to free-market domestic policies such as privatization, capital market deregulation and the abandonment of Keynesian macroeconomic management (Ibid, 248). Furthermore, neoliberalism which is also known as economic liberalism or economic rationalism provides reason to limit government in relation to the market (Gordon, 1991, Eleanor, 2007). This paradigm rests on the "… beliefs in the efficacy of the free market and the adoption of policies that prioritize deregulation, foreign debt reduction, privatization of the public sector… and a new orthodoxy of individual responsibility and the emergency safety net- thus replacing collective provision through a more residualist welfare state (Hancock, 1999). Neoliberalism seeks its own ways to integrate self conduct of the governed into the practices of their government and through the promotion of correspondingly appropriate techniques of self. It constructs ways in which individuals are required to assume the status of being the subject of their own lives- the entrepreneurial self. Neoliberal philosophy has been used as a critique of the state in an attempt to legitimate the minimization of the state in terms of its restructuring through corporatization and privatization. The neoliberal thought relies on:

> … a progressive enlargement of the territory of the theory by a series of redefinitions of its object, starting out from the neo-classical formula that economics concerns the study of all behaviours involving the allocation of scarce

> resources to alternative ends… economics becomes an approach capable of explaining all human behaviour (Gordon, 1991:43)

Paradoxically, under neoliberailsm, many western nations have been reformed through government intervention. The neoliberal explanation for the impetus for state sector reform locates it in the need to improve a nation's competiveness by increasing the efficiency of all sectors of the economy. Through neoliberal philosophy the regulatory environment is designed to facilitate the development of the market that has paradoxically been established through state intervention. Consequently, the essence of neoliberal reformation is cost cutting and setting education and health care up as a private good for sale rather than a public good paid for with the nation's resources. Neoliberal philosophy is today illustrated by terminologies such as spending cuts, dismantling, deficit cutting, downsizing, declining welfare state, competitiveness, inefficiencies, inevitability, user-pay fees, chopping services, escalating costs, and free markets. Neoliberalism from the moment of its emergence and spread in the 1980s has been perceived as a radical challenge to the philosophy underpinning the welfare state. Production and distribution of goods through the free market does not distinguish between ordinary consumer goods and public goods such as health care and education. Concepts such as welfare state, social justice are condemned as inefficient and unjust within the neoliberal paradigm. Under the neoliberal approach, citizens are viewed primarily as rational consumers of public goods with education, health care and social infrastructure being one of these goods. In other words, this philosophy places emphasis on the individual and mutual responsibilities rather than on rights and therefore, fails to distinguish between our roles as a consumers and citizens.

## A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE MDGs IN NIGERIA

> "Wherever we lift one soul from a life of poverty, we are defending human rights.
> And whenever we fail in this mission, we are failing human rights."
> -Kofi Annan (2000).

It is essential to stress that promoting human rights based development which underline the MDGs requires that people enjoy economic, social and political rights to welfare. However, in examining the relationship between neoliberalism and the attainment of human development, reduction of poverty and inequality in Nigeria, questions have been raised about the unevenness of the global economic order of neoliberalism generating both winners and losers in spite of the pace with which global integration of countries have increased over the past three decades. Critics of the neoliberal policy have conceived of the process as an exploitative phenomenon that sharpens inequality within and between states, increase poverty and attack the social welfare capacity of states (Cox, 1998:452). This is fundamentally so given the high social and human costs with which the free market reforms have been carried out to the detriment of the majority of the populace. While many of the developed nations particularly those with influence over the global political economy have gained as openness has grown, the benefits of neo-liberal economic globalization have not been evenly spread as free market enterprise has been associated with growing unequalization between the rich and poor countries, and in many cases, resulted in exacerbating the incidence of global poverty particularly in the global south which include Nigeria. A major feature of this process is the growing concentration and monopolization of economic resources and power by transnational corporations and the privatization of social security which ultimately undermine the people's welfare conditions (Cox, Ibid).

Consequently, most developing countries like Nigeria over the years have seen their independent policy making capacity in the areas of economic, social, political, cultural and technological issues eroded. This has come to fore as the country has had to implement policies that are in line with the decisions and rules of international financial institutions such as the World Bank/IMF which on balance are detrimental to the country and the people's well-being. Furthermore, in line with Wallerstein's postulation, a nation's development status can be understood by its placement within the overall world economic system. He conceived of capitalism as 'production for sale in a market to realize the maximum profit' (Wallerstein, 1979: 15; 2004). For him, as the world economy develops, so does the division of labour with different regions specializing in different aspects of production and consumption. The core countries consist of strong states that enforce both unequal trade and political relationships in such a way as to benefit them (the developed countries) at the expense of the periphery (developing nations). Core states appropriate surplus value from the periphery, which consists of areas that engage in mono-agriculture and export commodities that are produced using labour that is paid a low wage. Moreover, long after Third World countries have attained political independence, developed countries have continued to use their economic power to create international division of labour between nations. That division meant that production and export of manufactured goods- the most profitable economic activities-were originally concentrated in the core, industrialized west.

Given this economic relations, Third World countries were forced to trade for industrial imports on unfavourable terms. Today, however, many developing nations, including the new industrializing countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) must compete with the well established industrial giants as the United States, Japan, Britain and Germany to benefit from these uneven economic relations. Besides, many Third World countries still have to borrow financial capital and purchase advanced technology from the developed world, thereby making them dependent on external economic forces beyond their control and weakening the quest for development.

Thus, interrogating the MDGs from this perspective, it is obvious that the formulation of the MDGs lacked global inclusiveness (with inputs coming from both from the Developed and developing nations) in its making. The key targets that formed the foundation for the MDGs was the product of a so-called Inter-agency and Expert Group (IAEG) on the Millennium Development Goal Indicators, consisting of personnel from the DAC, World Bank, IMF and UNDP (Manning, 2009; Hulme, 2009; Hulme, 2010). Besides, the Millennium Declaration in 2000 which eventually led to the adoption of the MDGs targets was just a pledge by world leaders to show their commitment to poverty eradication, development and protecting the environment, without first reviewing the outcomes of previous partnership in terms of those who gained from it and those who were losers (i.e. the SAP policy framework). The MDGs were not a legally binding set of commitment and as such they were often ignored in practice due to absence of effective enforcement mechanisms. The MDGs relied too much on voluntary financial mechanisms notably the foreign aid outlays voted by each parliament in the developed world. Available evidence showed that only a handful of these countries had abided by the promises to give 0.7 percent of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as official development assistance (Sachs, 2008). Also, many African countries did fall short of the 7 percent annual economic growth that needed to be sustained to make substantial in-roads into poverty reduction (Clemens, Kenny and Moss, 2007). As such, the MDGs have been criticized for discouraging investment in productive sectors and promoting welfare and aid dependence over growth and self-reliance (Manning, 2010: 8). This top-down-approach in which the MDGs were developed remains one of the weaknesses of the current framework that undermined ownership of and commitment to the goals in developing countries (Rippin, 2013).

Similarly, the MDGs were to provide an impulse for the creation of a broader interpretation of human development beyond growth. However, instead of invoking a turn from the narrow economic growth paradigm towards a broader human development paradigm they were interpreted far too literal as social service provision. Thus, Vandemoortele (2011a: 13) declared bluntly: 'while the rescue of the Millennium Declaration has been quite successful, the search for a broader interpretation of development has failed. As such, before we can talk of any post 2015 agenda, it is important to provide a convincing development narrative that draws upon the lessons learned from the MDGs. The MDGs were targeted mainly for poor countries, to which rich countries were to add their solidarity and assistance through finance and technology. However, it is important to stress that issues of development should not be based on what the rich countries should do for the poor, but what all countries should do for the global well-being of this generation and those to come. The framers of the MDGs did not take into cognizance the state of development of most developing nations particularly Sub Saharan Africa and what was responsible for those conditions, including how to first resolve those challenges before pushing the MDGs targets down their throat. A critical factor to note is that initial conditions have considerable influence on the pace of countries' current and future development. Yet, history and initial conditions are not insurmountable barriers.

To begin, the MDGs framers failed to clearly emphasize that the success of any development agenda will require good governance at all levels. Giving primacy to state investment in people's capabilities-especially their health, education and nutrition engenders better human development dividends. One of the drivers of societal transformation requires a proactive developmental state (Human Development Report, 2013). The state is a necessary catalyst that pragmatically adjusts its policies and actions in line with new realities and challenges of global markets. Development does not just happen automatically and that transformation cannot be left to markets alone as it is with the case of the current neoliberal economic order. State needs to mobilize society through policies and institutions that advance economic and social development. As such, the way policies are transplanted should be context-specific, depending on country characteristics, government capabilities and relationships with the rest of the world. A common feature of countries that have brought about such transformations has had a strong, proactive state referred to as a "developmental state". This refers to a state with an activist government and often apolitical elite that sees rapid economic development as their primary aim.

Secondly, the continued implementation of the neoliberal economic policies by many African countries as emphasized by the “Washington Consensus”, which focused on getting economic fundamentalism right as a precondition for economic growth, believing that the benefits of growth would trickle down to the people and thereby engender human development improvements has not worked (Stiglitz, 2007). Rather, it is investing in people’s capabilities through health, education and other public services that constitute an integral part of economic growth process and not an appendage of it. For human development to thrive in the Third World, countries must supplement fast economic growth with social policies that benefit society more broadly, especially the poor. Consequently, market-driven policies avoid analysis of power relations, which ultimately determines inequality and poverty. The unequal access to resources explains poverty and deprivation. The 1993 and 1996 Human Development Reports clearly emphasized that the link between growth and human development needs to be forged through pro-poor policies by concurrently investing in health and education, expanding decent jobs, preventing the depletion and overexploitation of natural resources, ensuring gender balance and equitable income distribution and avoiding unnecessary displacement of communities. In fact, the 1996 Human Development Report have argued that the link between economic growth and human development have snapped several times and as such identified six (6) unwelcome types of growth: jobless growth, which does not increase employment opportunities; ruthless growth, which is accompanied by rising poverty; voiceless growth, which denies the participation of the most vulnerable communities; rootless growth, which use inappropriate models transplanted from elsewhere; and futureless growth, which is based on unbridled exploitation of environmental resources.

A third factor that has consistently undermine the promotion of human development, exacerbate poverty and inequality in the global south is the issue of corruption. Why the attainment of the MDGs requires huge sums of funds to be invested for the targets to be attained, most developing countries, especially Sub-Saharan Africa do not have the financial capacity to finance the MDGs due to massive misappropriation and looting of the commonwealth of their various countries by the political leaders with the active collaboration from financial institutions in the developed societies who provide ‘safe’ haven for the funds. This condition has impacted negatively on the required investment needed to finance the provision of infrastructure, healthcare, education, and create job opportunities. Most governments in the developing world with specific reference to Nigeria lacked the transparency, accountability and focus required in the financing of the MDGs. They are oblivious of the fact that the MDGs are ends in themselves and also capital inputs- the means to a productive life, to economic growth and to future development. Most of them fail to recognize that they are responsible to their citizens to whom they must secure their basic material needs and as such do not promote the notion of subsidiarity-where governance should be close to the people as functionally as possible, giving individuals and families maximum freedom of action, exchange ideas with and share information in good faith.

Furthermore, when individuals and whole economies lack even the most basic infrastructure, health services and education, there is very little market forces can accomplish and ultimately not much will be achieved in attaining the MDGs. As such, households and whole economies remain trapped in poverty and fail to reap the benefits of globalization. With poor infrastructure and human capital, countries are condemned to export narrow range of low margin primary commodities based on natural (physical) endowments, rather than a diversified set of exports. In this circumstances, globalization do have significant adverse effects-including brain drain, environmental degradation, biodiversity, capital flight and terms of trade declines-rather than bring benefits through increased foreign direct investment inflows and technological advances. Thus, investing in core infrastructure, human capital and good governance can accomplish several things: it converts subsistence farming to market-oriented farming; it enables a country to join the global division of labour in a productive way, and it sets the stage for technological advance and eventually for an innovation-based economy.

Bringing this to the Nigeria context, it is regrettable that with more than two decades into the implementation of the neoliberal economic reforms in Nigeria, the country is still encumbered with the growing incidence of massive inequality between the rich and the poor, uneven income distribution, massive corruption, human deprivation, weak infrastructure amongst others. For instance, over the last two decades, Nigeria has consistently occupied the low ranking position in the UNDP Human Development Index reports. Budgetary allocation in the key sectors such as education and healthcare has never gone beyond 13 percent and 5 percent. Unemployment rate has skyrocketed to 23 percent in 2011 while health indicators in the area of child/infant mortality, under-five mortality and maternal mortality remain one of the highest in the world. The country today is far from realizing the development targets enunciated in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which emphasized the goal of countries delivering human rights based development. Furthermore, history has shown that no nation of the world grew and enjoyed steady transformation in virtually all aspects of its national life without experiencing good and selfless leadership (Gambari, 2008). This is largely because qualitative growth and development has always been the outcome of good governance, of which leadership is a critical factor. Commenting on the experience of Nigeria as a nation-state, the renowned novelist, Chinua Achebe, insisted that the root cause of Nigeria's development predicament should be laid squarely at the foot of bad leadership. In his renowned book, "The trouble with Nigeria," Achebe argued:

> The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the land, climate, water, air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of the its leaders to rise to their responsibility, to the challenge of personal example, which is the hallmark of true leadership (Achebe, 1984:1)

Thus, the state of Nigeria's dwindling socioeconomic development over the years has been a direct consequence of the actions and inactions of the leadership class/elites that have managed the affairs and commonwealth of the country since independence. The country has the most poor men and women after India and China; 10 percent of the world's child and maternal deaths, and 25 percent of global malaria cases. Besides, every day 136 women die due to complications during pregnancy, over 2,300 children under five die every day from malnutrition or preventable diseases, and 10.5 million children do not go to school, the most of any country in the world. Despite producing crude oil, Nigeria's total economy is one twentieth the size of United Kingdom's economy, with many more people (UK Bilateral Aid Review, 2010). Available data indicates that over 68 percent of the Nigerian population of over 167 million live below the poverty line, unemployment has hit an all time high of 24 percent in 2015, from 23.90 percent in 2011 and 5.6 percent in 2005; 10.5 million children are out of school in Nigeria, 20 percent of child deaths in sub-Saharan Africa occur in Nigeria, under five mortality has increased from 138 per 1000 live births in 2007 to 158 per 1000 live births in 2011 and 145 women of childbearing age die daily and life expectancy is 52 years (UNDPHDR 2013**,** Punch Newspaper, August 14, 2013, NBS, 2013). Although Nigeria's economic potential is enormous due to the size of its domestic market, geographical position and its human and natural resources, the nation's wealth creation is skewed to the already well-off in spite of the non-oil sectors of the economy growing fast in recent years (over 10% a year). The country's oil revenues is consistently being frittered away by self serving political leadership class whose interests are mired in the pursuit of primitive accumulation of wealth at the expense of broader national interests.

Thus, of all the problems that undermined Nigeria's national development, corruption arising from bad leadership is cited as the greatest impediment that stifles human development, produces poverty and reinforces inequality in the country (Smith, 2007: 55). The political elites plunder the country's wealth for their personal self-aggrandizement and to reward their personal allies and external foreign collaborators at the expense of the welfare of the people. For instance, since independence, Nigeria has made over US$ 1 trillion dollars; of this amount US$600 billion has been stolen by the leaders (military and civilian alike) (Save Nigeria Group, 2012). In the same vein, the governance process has been mired with lack of inclusive participation, the consent of the governed, non discrimination, transparency, rule of law and effective utilization of resources with the goal of enhancing the quality of life of the people (UNDP 2010; Sen, 1999; Todaro and Smith, 2011). Instead, what we have happening is the democratization of disempowerment characterized by executive indiscipline and recklessness, impunity, weak political institutions, lack of commitment to democratic ideals and values, poor democratic culture, suppression of opposing views against government policies, amongst others which are inimical to development. This is evidently so because the prosperity of nations has correlations to its kind of leadership which ultimately shapes the fortune or fate of the society. Underlying the issue of bad leadership is the nature in which politics is played that tendentially negates the essence and quality of governance. A people-centred approach to development still remains a dilemma. While Nigeria may boast of high economic growth rates, human development still lags behind. Thus, governance for human development entails protecting human rights, promoting wider participation in the institutions and rules that affect people's lives and achieving equitable economic and social outcomes. It expresses the idea that people's welfare comes first; governance must conform to the needs of the people and not vice-versa. Here, public participation has become central to contemporary development thinking. Blackburn and Jeremy (1998:2) defined participation as the commitment to help create conditions which can lead to a significant empowerment of those who at present have little control over forces that condition their lives. The World Bank (2001:3) see participation as process through which stake holders influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources that affect them.

Thus, it is obvious from the above discourse that the country is intrinsically characterized by economic quagmire resulting in high youth unemployment, hunger and poverty among the citizenry. The crisis of governance and development in Nigeria result from the glaring disconnection of Nigeria's political institutions from moral and cultural impulses that sees governance and development as a public interest project rather than a private enclave for minority elite who find themselves in power. Tied to this is the structural character of the Nigerian state which serves as the site for booty capitalism. Politics and invariably governance in Nigeria has turned into a huge business enterprise where competition rules and institutional processes are openly and crassly violated with impunity, and where regulators in government institutions have become active collaborators in the grand larceny of democratic politics as a public interest project. With all these in operation, it becomes difficult to promote the welfare of the people and invariably the attainment of the MDGs.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the above, it is evident that the one-size-fits all or single minded focus on economic policy order of neo-liberalism needs to be urgently reviewed. Eliminating widespread poverty and inequality in developing societies requires that the top-down-approach to the formulation of the MDGs, including previous economic development programme for sub-Saharan African countries be revised urgently as it has never advanced the well-being of the people and the continent at large. Instead, future development strategies must allow for all inclusiveness where the inputs (in terms of challenges peculiar to each nation or continent) of both developed and developing countries are harnessed to come up with broader interpretation of development that shifts major focus from economic growth to pay attention to human development issues that clearly promote unambiguously significant investments in people's capabilities through a determined focus on education, nutrition and health and skill acquisition. The dearth or non-existence of these basic needs amount to denial of human rights. Thus, dealing with issues of infrastructural and institutional deficits are necessary ingredients required for promoting growth. Likewise, any future development agenda should set in place enforceable mechanisms that demand compliance from all countries that have signed up to a development declaration to act and not just engage the rhetorics of promissory note that was the case with the MDGs.

Similarly, the tenets of economic globalization must be made much more democratic and open for the mutual benefits of all countries. Therefore, economic policies that further exacerbate the already precarious state of poverty and inequality in African societies should be jettisoned out rightly and resisted by African peoples and governments. Furthermore, for the issues of poverty and inequality to be adequately tackled, the government has a large role to play in terms of what it does. Governments must design policies to make sure that the poor share in the benefits of economic growth. If the fruits of growth is not shared throughout society but appropriated by a few, then development has failed. In the same vein, government policies must discourage conspicuous consumption and mitigate the large wage disparities that exist in the society. If people, who are the nation's most important resource lack access to education, suffer malnutrition and poor sanitation, the country will not be able to live to its potential. At the other extreme, high level poverty and inequality, especially as a result of unemployment can result in social unrest, increase in crimes, kidnapping and terrorism, thus creating a climate unattractive to businesses and overall national development.

On the issue of governance, the political elites in government must come to terms with the reality that the whole essence of development is all about people's welfare. The people are the agents, means and end of development, and as such their interests and well-being must be the measure of all things. Thus, economic and social policies must become responsive to people's needs and aspirations. Also, the institutions of governance and processes should be truly democratic in nature and targeted at promoting human rights based approaches such as equality, non-discrimination, accountability, transparency, public participation, rule of law and social inclusion. Furthermore, government must see the gathering of relevant demographic data as a necessity upon which measurable improvement in people's lives can be based. This will go a long way to influence effective evidence based policy making, implementation and evaluation. Regrettably, in many developing countries, including Nigeria, availability of reliable human development indicators is inadequate, and where available they are susceptible to political manipulations.

On the issue of corruption which has been agreed by all as the bane of our national development, there is the need to enact laws that will set up special court headed by incorruptible Nigerians of repute to try corruption and money laundering cases without fear or favour. It is also important to review the immunity law for public office holders at all levels of governance so that they can be held accountable for any official misconduct while in office. It is also very instructive going forward, that the State must begin to hold central and commercial bank officials responsible for any case of corruption and money laundering involving any public office holder since most of the funds stolen are transferred through these channels. Similarly, this is the time for the developed nations to play their active role in the so-called global partnership for development by enacting laws that prohibit their banking institutions from providing safe haven for money stolen by political office holders in the developing nations. In all, promoting human development represents the linchpin in the quest for a more secure and peaceful world. Effective tackling of poverty and inequality is possible when a nation's resources are channeled towards massive investment in education, healthcare and equitable growth coupled with efficient governance processes.

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