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PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *Several poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria, initiated by both the Government and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), aimed at combating and alleviating poverty, have been found not to be successful. Instead of reducing the incidence of poverty, which is their sole aim, these programmes tend to serve as means for draining the national resources due to the pursuit of parochial interests, as a result fostering corruption and dishonesty. For a successful implementation of these programmes, the government and the implementation agencies must take a more proactive approach and specifically look into the area of poor management and poor accountability, among staff. Also poverty is a multidimensional issue, hence cannot be fought focusing only on one sector of the economy, strategies for poverty reduction must also be multidimensional, focusing on all sectors, as well as, on the emancipation of the poor. Strengthen the existing poverty alleviation strategies and ensuring good management could be one major way towards the effective performance of existing poverty alleviation programmes.*

KEYWORDS: Poverty, Poverty alleviation, Poverty alleviation programmes, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The problem of poverty in Africa has over the years engaged the attention of the international community, governmental and non-governmental agencies, including African scholars. Poverty in African countries is massive, pervasive and chronic, engulfing a large proportion of the society (Uma & Eboh, 2013). In Nigeria, human conditions have greatly deteriorated (particularly in the last decade) with real disposable incomes dwindled and malnutrition rates on the increase. Aiyedogbon and Ohwofasa (2012) emphasized that the situation is more critical considering that in spite of the vast resources committed to poverty alleviation by every successive administration; no obvious achievement has been accomplished in this direction.

What is Poverty?

There is hardly a universal way of defining poverty because it affects many aspects of human conditions. However, the conventional concept of poverty depicts it as a condition in which people live below a specified minimum income level and are unable to provide the basic necessities of life needed for an acceptable standard of living. Poverty is a plaque which affects people all over the world, though generally considered as one of the manifestations of underdevelopment. Poverty, as cited in Aderonmu (2010), was defined as lack of command over basic consumption needs (Ravallion & Bidani, 1994), having inadequate level of consumption (Aluko, 1975), and inability of a person to attain a minimum standard of living and high status in a society (World Bank Report, 1990). Nevertheless, to attempt a compromise definition of poverty, one can see it as a condition "where an individual is not able to cater adequately for his/her basic needs (such as 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, potable water and sanitation), and consequently has limited chance of advancing his/her welfare to the limit of his/her potentials and capabilities".

Perception of Poverty

Poverty have been illustrated using different criteria; such as glaring defects in the economy - evidenced in mass penury, pauperization of the working class, the professional class including artisans, mass unemployment and poor welfare services, absence or lack of basic necessities of life including material wealth, common place regular flow of wages and income and inability to sustain oneself based on existing resources. It is "a situation when the resources of individuals or families are inadequate to provide a socially acceptable standard of living" (Johnson, 1974, cited in Agwu & Kadiri, 2014, p. 2). As cited in Fasoranti (2010:1439), poverty is seen as a state of involuntary deprivation (Odusola, 2001; Ogwumike, 2001), lack of capabilities to carry out certain activities (Desai, 1992) and lack of adequate basic necessities of life (Englama & Bamidele, 1997; Madinagu, 1999; Oladunni, 2001). According to Obayelu and Uffort (2007) poverty has been perceived by many as not just lack of money, food and assets but also as lack of access to education and health care and lack of security, dignity and independence. However, a person's perception of poverty is a function of his present experience, condition of his environment, the aim of such definition, his vocation and his definition of the good life (Fasoranti, 2010).

Within the Nigerian context therefore, the following conditions are perceived as poor:

i. Households or individuals below the poverty line and whose incomes are insufficient to provide for their basic needs.

ii. Households or individuals lacking access to basic services, political contracts and other forms of support.

iii. People in isolated rural areas who lack essential infrastructures.

iv. Female-headed households whose nutritional needs are not being met adequately.

v. Persons who have lost their jobs and are unable to find employment as a result of economic reforms.

vi. Ethnic minorities who are marginalized, deprived and persecuted economically, socially, culturally and politically.

Indicators of Poverty

Measures of economic performance and the standard of living of the population are used to indicate poverty. They include the Poverty Gap Index or Income Gap Index which measures the shortfall or gap between the average income of the poor and the poverty line, the Gini Index measuring the extent to which the distribution of income or consumption expenditure among individuals or households within a population deviates from a perfectly equal distribution, the Human Development Index (HDI) which was recently developed by the UNDP to provide a composite measure of both the economic and the social indicators of human development. The

HDI, using longevity, knowledge, and income as data, combines measurement of purchasing power with measures of health and educational attainments to indicate progress or retrogression in human life. Some others are GNP per capita, the purchasing power of real GDP per capita, etc. Specifically, a country's poverty line represents the value of basic food and non-food needs considered essential for meeting the minimum standard of living with the society. Therefore a nation's poverty rate is the percentage of its population living below its poverty line. It is good to know that about 70 percent of Nigerians live below the poverty line (Okhiria & Obadeyi, 2015).

Causes of Poverty

There are two broad schools of thought to causes of poverty - Low economic growth and Market imperfections. The low economic growth is associated with increased unemployment and underemployment when the income of those affected may generally not be sufficient for them to maintain adequate standard of living. Market imperfection on the other hand has to do with institutional distortions which would not make for equal opportunity to productive assets. They include ignorance, culture and inequitable income distribution. The International Community has in recent years given attention to the study of poverty in the Sub-Saharan African region with a view to identifying the causes in order to provide appropriate solutions. The World Bank has done much work in this area, with studies like "Taking Action for Poverty Reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa in 1996; and The Social Impact of Adjustment Operations" in 1995.

The following have been identified as causes of poverty - Inadequate access to employment opportunities; Inadequate physical assets; Inadequate access to the means of supporting rural development in poor region; Inadequate access to markets for goods and services that the poor can sell; Low endowment of human capital; Destruction of natural resources endowment; Inadequate access to assistance for those living at the margin and those victimized by transitory poverty because of drought, floods, pests and war; Inadequate participation of the poor in the design of development programmes; Poor maintenance culture or failure to retain and maintain existing structures, leading to deterioration in rural, urban, and high way roads and township slums and drainages. They can be summarized as follows:

1. **The Stage of Economic and Social Development:** A situation of economic underdevelopment can be a hindrance to the capacity of a nation to formulate and implement programmes and projects that would enhance real economic growth. In a situation like this, poverty will tend to persist, because economic growth is the first necessary step to poverty alleviation.

2. **Low Productivity**: Low productivity may be due to obsolescence of human skill or low acquired skill resulting from low education, poor health and physical incapacity. It could also be as a result of inadequate access to productive assets and consequently unemployment or underemployment. This causes poverty since the consuming unit is unable to earn enough income to maintain adequate/decent living standard. Nigeria's human and physical skills have tended to deteriorate with the passage of time as a result of a combination of brain-drain and falling educational facilities and funding.

3. **Market Imperfections:** Distortions in the employment market which introduce all forms of discrimination and rigidities, and prevent the advancement of people along the social and economic ladder of progress, in the form of sex, age, colour, race and tribe

constitute market imperfections. Also, the existence of an income distribution structure which is skewed in favour of some classes in the society is a form of market imperfection that renders the less favoured class poor.

4. **Physical or Environmental Degradation:** A classic case of this cause of poverty is readily seen in countries like Ethiopia, Sudan, and Somalia in Africa. Misuse or over-use of land which results in deforestation, desert encroachment and blight in an excessive shifting cultivation system of agriculture are destructive of endowed land resources, swelling the population of the poor as well as deepening the incidence of poverty. It is the same effect that oil spillage produces from mindless exploitation of crude oil.

5. **Structural Shift in the Economy:** Inadequate macro-economic management policies usually result in an unwholesome shift in economic activity. Nigeria is a good example of such a structural shift. Before the advent of crude oil, it was a well-balanced economy with five principal export commodities, namely, cocoa, palm produce, rubber, groundnuts and cotton. The country's structural shift occurred when undue concentration was given to crude oil to the neglect of agriculture which provides job for the rural poor. In the progress, the economy became monoculture, while mass poverty became the lot of the rural sector, with the consequent rural-urban drift which also swelled the number of the urban poor. The South-East Asian countries (Malaysia and Indonesia) present good cases of efforts at preventing undesirable structural shift.

6. **Inadequate Commitment to Programme Implementation:** Much of the policies and programmes in the Development Plans of the 1970s and 1980s, in Nigeria for example, were not faithfully implemented even when the country did not suffer lack of funds. This failure contributed to deepening poverty. Specifically, the failure to adequately implement the Structural Adjustment Programme after 1990 worsened the lot of the poor, as this led to continued workers' retrenchment and general economic hardship.

7. **Corruption:** The incidence of corruption has taken a frightening dimension such that Nigeria is now internationally regarded as one of the most if not the most corrupt country in the world. Nigeria is ranked 27, on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean), on the 2014 Corruption Perception Index (CPI). The CPI is based on the damaging impact of corruption on human and economic development, and ranks countries according to the extent to which they are perceived round the world as corrupt. The frightening damage to well- being and economic development of corruption is such the World Bank in collaboration with the Transparency International published a book entitled "**New perspective on Combating Corruption"** in 1998, as means of combating it internationally. At the regional level, the Asian Development Bank undertook a major study which has led to the evolving and approval of an anti-corruption policy in the South East Asian region. The study established the following facts:

    a. The total losses due to corruption can be more than a country's foreign debt;

    b. Corruption can cost government as much as 50 percent of their tax revenues;

    c. Corruption can add between 20 percent and 100 percent to government costs for goods and services.

Past Government and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) Poverty Alleviation Programmes

The first was the *Farm Settlement Option* introduced in 1960's. The intention of the Nigerian government was to develop both the export and cash crops. In 1972, the scheme collapsed but birthed the *National Accelerated Food Production project*. The projective was to create an avenue for testing and adapting agricultural research findings and making such available to farmers. In 1973, *Agriculture Development Project (ADP)* was established to provide credit facilities for the development of agricultural projects, in order to promote integrated rural developments. It was partly financed and executed by the World Bank, but became moribund after a brief spell. *Operation Feed the Nation* came on board in 1976 to arouse in Nigerians, the habit of cultivating food and cash crops in order to be self-reliant. It only succeeded in arousing the awareness of increasing food production without any appreciable increase in agricultural production. In 1977 the *Rural Banking Scheme* was designed to bring banking nearer to the people at the grassroots through granting of credit facilities. In addition the Federal Military Government in 1978 introduced *Austerity Measures* by banning the importation of some goods and placing others on license. Government expenditure was greatly reduced and emphasis was placed on the consumption of made-in-Nigeria goods. But the measures were relaxed in 1979.

In 1980, the Shagari government introduced the *Green Revolution Programme.* To realize this programme, the River Basin Development Authority was formed to assist agriculture and farmers. However, there were many schemes put in place in 1986 by the Nigerian government to alleviate the suffering of the poor. Firstly, there was the *Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP),* designed to put the economy back on the path of recovery. Nigerians were taught to look inward for local sourcing of raw materials. One of its objectives is to lay the basis for a sustainable non-inflationary or minimal inflationary growth. Later the *National Directorate of Employment (NDE)* was introduced which was targeted at the unemployed youths, to train and provide financial guidance. The sole aim was to provide employment, with emphasis on self-reliance and entrepreneurship. There was also the *Directorate for Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI)* which was targeted at the rural areas. It was sustained through the provision of feeder roads, rural water supplies and rural electrification. DFRRI was formed for community development and social mobilization, community self-help projects, adult education, home economics, rural development, data collection and analysis, and the provision of rural housing and infrastructures.

In 1987, the government introduced the *Better Life Programme (BLP)* targeted at the rural women; the thrust of the programme was self-help and rural development programmes, skill acquisition and health care. There was also the *National Policy on Science and Technology,* meant to boost the development of indigenous technology. In order to give succour to the industrial revolution sweeping through the country the Federal Government set up the *Science and Technology Fund (STF)* and the *National Economic Recovery Fund (NERFUND)* in 1989. This was further boosted, same year, by the establishment of *People's Bank of Nigeria,* targeted at the underprivileged in the rural and urban areas, to encourage savings and to grant credit facilities to small businessmen and women. Community Banking started in 1990 to meet the rural residents' micro enterprises in urban areas through the establishment of banks within a defined geographical area to meet the yearnings of the community. The *Family Support Programme (FSP)* was another poverty alleviation programme, launched in 1994 and targeted at the families in the rural areas. It was supported with health care delivery, child welfare, and youth development. *Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP)* was another of the series of poverty alleviation programmes introduced in 1997. It was targeted at the rural areas through granting of credit facilities to support the establishment of cottage industries.

The current poverty alleviation programme from 1999 till date is the *National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)*. It focuses on the provision of strategies for the eradication of absolute poverty in Nigeria. NAPEP is complemented by the National Poverty Eradication Council (NAPEC) which is to coordinate poverty reduction related activities of all the relevant Ministries, Parastatals and Agencies. The poverty reduction-related activities of the institutions under NAPEP have been classified into four - Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS), Social Welfare Service Scheme (SOWESS) and Natural Resources Development and Conservative Scheme (NRDCS). Since the inception of the civilian administration in 1999, the following policies have been adopted in poverty alleviation programme.

i. Trade and payment liberalization.

ii. Tariff reform and rationalization for the promotion of industrial diversification.

iii. Deregulation and greater reliance on market forces particularly in the downstream activities of the crude oil industry.

iv. Adoption of appropriate pricing policies of all commodities and

v. Adoption of measures to stimulate production and broaden the supply base of the economy.

Other schemes and programmes that have been implemented in the past include the following.

- The People's Bank Programme (PBN) established by decree No 22 of 1990. It was designed to extend credit services to the poor.
- The Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF), responsible for the rehabilitation and provision of urban roads, water, health facilities, educational materials and agricultural facilities.
- The Oil and Mineral Producing Areas Development Committee (OMPADEC) which provides development aid to the oil producing areas.
- National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) for the provision of agricultural infrastructures.
- The Nomadic Education Programme - to raise the literacy level among the nomadic groups.
- River Basin Development Authorities (RBDA) for the development of the basins of the country's major rivers.

The list has not been exhausted here but in all there are over twenty of these institutions and programmes established by the government in Nigeria with a view to reduce the incidence of poverty. However, it is sad to observe that all these effort have not produced the desired results as they have only achieved modest successes while the level of poverty still remain high.

Several reasons have been given for the failure of these institutions and programmes (Aliyu, 1999, cited in Aluko, 2003, p. 262). First, the fact that some of the functions of these agencies and programmes have been duplicated leading to unnecessary plurality of influences and interests. Secondly, in some cases, the implementation agencies have been wrongly identified and as such roles and functions have been wrongly allocated. Thirdly, contended that in some cases, there is the non-existence of the right or appropriate implementation agencies thus creating gaps in the implementation trend. Again, there is the problem of poor management, poor accountability, high level of corruption and dishonesty, pursuit of parochial interests, poor staffing, incompetence, lack of commitment, among the rank and file of the workers in many of the implementation agencies.

Why Government Strategies Failed

A number of factors have contributed to the failure of past poverty alleviation programmes and efforts. Some of them are:

1. Lack of targeting mechanisms for the poor: most of the programmes do not focus directly on the poor.
2. Political and policy instability: this has resulted in frequent policy changes and inconsistent implementation, which in turn have prevented the continuous progress of the programmes.
3. Severe budgetary, management and governance problems: these have afflicted most of the programmes, resulting in either uncompleted, broken down and abandoned facilities, which are most times unstaffed and unequipped.
4. Overextended scope of activities of most institutions resulting in resources being spread too thinly on too many activities. DFRRI and BLP, for example, covered almost every sector and overlapped with many other existing programmes.
5. Lack of accountability and transparency: these made the programmes to serve as conduit pipes for draining national resources.
6. Inadequate coordination of the various programmes: this resulted in each institution carrying out its own activities with resultant duplication of effort and inefficient use of limited resources.
7. Most of the programmes lacked vision for their sustainability.
8. Absence of agreed poverty reduction agenda that can be used by all concerned Federal Government, State Governments, NGO's and the International Donor Community.
9. Lack of cooperation among the three tiers of government.
10. Inappropriate programme design reflecting lack of involvement of beneficiaries in the formulation and implementation of programmes. Most beneficiaries were not motivated to identify themselves sufficiently with the successful implementation of the programmes.

Added to the above mentioned facts,

a. There was capacity underutilization
b. There was difficulty of obtaining access to large farm lands and finance
c. Heavy taxation from all tiers of Government.
d. Persistent dependence on imported inputs.
e. Inadequate infrastructure for movement, processing and preservation of agricultural products.
f. High operating costs arising from the private investments in infrastructural support services such as electricity and water supply.

The Way Forward

Since the causes of poverty are multidimensional, in the same way the strategies for poverty reduction must also be multidimensional. The following suggestions are made:

According to Aliyu (1999), as cited in Aluko (2003:263), a very strong and solid foundation is essential for the successful implementation of poverty reduction programmes in any developing country. The solid base should be in the areas of:

a) National Security and Political stability;
b) Discipline;
c) Infrastructural Development;
d) Economic stability and provision of adequate welfare services.

Again the World Bank in its 1996 report suggests two strategies. These are:

1. Promotion of the productive use of the poor's most abundant asset-labour. This invariably calls for policies that create market incentives, stable social and political institutions, good infrastructure and adaptable technology.
2. Making basic social services available to the poor. Hence primary health care, family planning, balanced nutrition and primary education are of prime importance.

Also economic growth remains the primary means of reducing poverty and improving the quality of life. Therefore economic policies should be directed towards poverty reduction, such as increased sectoral allocation to the productive sectors of the economy in order to create more jobs and raise the level of employment. Unemployment is perceived as a key part of poverty (Olotu, Salami & Akeremale, 2015). There is a unanimous view that adequate employment opportunities are lacking given that Nigeria's economic problems have seriously affected industrial growth, which could have eased the problem. It is clear that poverty cannot be reduced in Nigeria in the face of the present high level of unemployment. The World Bank identified four measures, from their 1990 report, that could increase the income of the poor:

1. Increasing the demand and therefore the price for factors of production which the poor own i.e. their labour.
2. Transferring assets such as land to the poor.

3. Providing social services such as education to the poor.
4. Subsidies to the poor through cash and food.

The World Bank's study, "Taking Action for Poverty Reduction in sub-Saharan Africa", emphasized the redistribution of wealth approach. In that way, distrust, inequity, unrest, eventual civil war and the pressure for political changes may not be perpetuated , thereby saving the society from social and political unrest which retard development which result in retrogression.

The following measures are thus recommended measures:

1. **Growth and Development must move pari-passu**: The pattern of economic growth and widespread grassroots development of basic necessities and amenities that result in improved welfare must be evident. The choice of a particular growth pattern or strategy to attain it involves choosing among different public policies and expenditures. Such choices may involve emphasizing rural over urban investments, for example, in building roads, or emphasizing primary health services over tertiary services such as universities and hospitals. The quality of service and maintenance of public utilities and infrastructures need to be seriously tackled with conscious awareness.
2. **Distribution of the Benefits of Growth**: There is need for improvement in income distribution. Relatively high levels of inequality persist in Nigeria, even where solid growth and a reduction in the average incidence of poverty have occurred. Current high levels of inequality, low human capital development, and the low level of assets held by the poor in Nigeria underline the importance of instituting a pattern of growth beneficial to the poor.
3. **Changing the Pattern of Growth:** Although evidence shows that economic growth is a powerful means of reducing poverty, not all patterns of growth have the same impact. For example, production incentives that encourage growth in rural areas will likely directly benefit farmers but also indirectly benefit the landless through an increased demand for labour and those involved in agricultural marketing. Labour-intensive agricultural growth is particularly important for poverty reduction because agriculture in Nigeria provides employment for up to 70 percent of the labour force. Women typically are already overburdened with household and other tasks and therefore have limited time for national work. A different set of strategy is needed to reduce their poverty, such as increased access to productive assets and technologies to increase the productivity of activities they typically perform. A restructuring of FEAP will benefit the women-folk in raising their level of economic activities and income. Enhancing access of small scale farmers and traders (particularly women) to credit, improving rural infrastructure, and generating and applying better production technologies are important measures for poverty alleviation.
4. **Rural Improvement:** For rural people to lead productive and enjoyable lives, and therefore, to participate actively in various social-economic activities, they will also need better access to education, health and water supply services. The effect of growth on poverty is measured by the extent to which national growth in income helps to reduce the national measure of poverty. This growth elasticity depends on the ability of the poor to take advantage of expanded economic opportunities offered through growth,

which in turn is governed by their access to land, credit, education, health care, markets and so on.

5. **Pursuit of Accelerated and Equitable Distribution of Growth:** Nigeria should set a growth rate of not less than 6.5 to 7.0 percent per year. Assuming a population growth rate of 2.5 percent per year, an annual growth rate per capita of 4.0 percent would allow a doubling of average per capita income in about 18 years. If the distribution of this growth were to focus more on the poor, average per capita incomes would double more rapidly. This would at least represent substantial progress in reducing poverty. Nigeria's perspective plan should make this target recommendation its goal.

Other measures include:

I. Improvement in the performance of the hard core infrastructural services.

II. Maintenance of price and exchange rate stability in order to create a healthy balance of payment.

III. Creation of consistency in monetary and fiscal policies aimed at persistent reduction of the dependence of the real sector on imported inputs.

IV. Restructuring the economy so as to be more private led and technology driven.

V. The government can target the delivery of some services and resources to reach poor areas and to communities living in poverty, building on existing community-based organization, civil society groups and their activities where possible.

VI. There is the need to extend the bottom-up rather than the top-down approach concept to include direct participation of the benefiting communities in project identification. Therefore, there should be sufficient participation of the grassroots people in the identification and implementation of projects affecting their lives.

VII. Consideration should be given to making poverty alleviation an explicit constitutional matter in view of the fact that no one administration can meaningfully bind its successor to its programmes. It should also be incorporated in the nation's overall development/policy management framework.

VIII. Corruption and other sharp practices at any stage of the programme should not be condoned. It is expected that the bottom-up approach to project identification with attendant association of beneficiaries with the projects, will minimize vandalization.

IX. Finally, in order to ensure transparency and accountability in the management of poverty reduction programmes and projects, all the stakeholders should be involved in the monitoring and evaluation of such projects.

The NHDR (1998) further suggested that Nigeria should subscribe to and fully implement the 20:20 compact on human development (cited in Aluko, 2003, p. 264). This means that Federal, state and local governments would commit every year not less than 20 percent of their combined recurrent and capital budgets to the following specific human development targets during the next ten years:

1. *Education:*

  - Basic education for all;
  - Reduction of adult illiteracy by one half of current figure;

2. *Health:*
   - Universal access to primary health care sanitation;
   - The immunization of all children;
   - Reduction of maternal mortality by one half;
   - Eliminating completely severe malnutrition and reducing moderate malnutrition by a half.
3. *Population:*
   - Access to family planning by all willing couples.

However meaningful education is the most potent instrument for alleviating and eventually abolishing poverty (NHDR, 1998; cited in Aluko, 2003, p. 264). It is education that is expected to provide opportunities.

CONCLUSION

As discussed in the body of this paper, the incidence of poverty is prevalent worldwide but mostly common in the developing countries of the world, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and South America. The causes of poverty have also been extensively discussed in the paper. However, there is no end to seeking ways to end the ugly phenomenon. Among other things therefore the following are positive steps to take to further combat poverty:

General Considerations

- Ensure good economic management - Move the economy away from excessive import dependence.
- Strengthen the existing poverty alleviation strategies for effective performance.
- Emphasis on basic socio-economic infrastructure (education, health services, roads etc)
- Institute policies which directly focus on the emancipation of the poor.

Agricultural Sector

There is need to promote the diverse agricultural potentials of the developing nations such that food crops and cash crops (for export) can be adequately produced. This will require deliberate and focused attention from both the government and the private sectors of the economy.

Manufacturing Sector

Developing nations should further build on the existing potentials of industrialization. Nigeria for example should develop its manufacturing capabilities. Presently, its light manufactured goods such as tyres, processed food, shoes, and detergents etc. have made deep in road into the African continent.

Social Welfare Services

There is need to upgrade social welfare services, especially for the aged and the disabled as these categories of citizens are more vulnerable to poverty.

The Oil Producing Area

The crisis in the oil producing areas of Nigeria is basically caused by the poverty of the citizens generally. They perceive that their resources are being taken away to develop other parts of the nation while their welfare has been neglected over years. It will be helpful therefore to pay more attention to them by:

- Adopting innovative strategies that will benefit the oil communities via job creation and enhanced employment opportunities.
- Elimination of corruption in the operations of NNDC — the body set up by Government to accelerate development in the oil producing areas.
- Actually increase the percentage of the oil revenue accruing to the oil producing states substantially.
- Strengthening the security arrangement in the oil producing areas to guarantee the safety of lives and property of operations and investments of oil companies.

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