

Poverty Eradication as an agent of Good Governance

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ABSTRACT

The universal meaning of poverty is not yet settled. It has remained a relative concept and “according to the conventions of the society in which it occurs” Poverty, however, can now be measured. In some countries a poverty line is drawn and persons below this line are regarded as poor while in some countries “an income support assistance programme is established and those who receive support are regarded as poor”. What is common in all the yardsticks for measuring poverty is that the poor suffer material lack. It “is about not having enough money to meet basic needs including, food, clothing and shelter”. It is important to note that poverty cannot be eradicated, it can only be alleviated using strategic tools such as education, income distribution, providing infrastructure, provision of health facilities, food and water, provision of skills, development of agriculture and helping farmers to grow, empowering women, employment, micro loans, economic and political participation of the poor, development aid, management of communal conflicts. The combination of these wherever it is strategically applied has shown great impact in the efforts to lift the people out of poverty. Enugu State under Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi is a case in point. Ugwuanyi has been locally, nationally and internationally acclaimed for his governance principles and for engaging in multivaried actions aimed at eradicating poverty.

Keywords: Poverty Eradication, Governance, economic and political

INTRODUCTION

According to the World Bank Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and being unable to see a doctor [1,2,3]. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time. Poverty has many faces, changing from place to place and across time, and has been described in many ways. Most often, poverty is a situation people want to escape. So poverty is a call to action - for the poor and the wealthy alike - a call to change the world so that many more may have enough to eat, adequate shelter, access to education and health, protection from violence, and a voice in what happens in their communities King Birendira Vic Bikram graphically depicted the picture of the poor this way: A poor man ...suffers from poor nutrition. He is vulnerable to diseases. His average life span is short. He lives in

huts where squalorperpetuallysurrounds him [4]. He is illiterate both in letter and skills. He does not get his meal regularly, but when he does, he is haunted with fear of where his next will come from ...lack of hygiene, minimal food or contagious diseases have inflicted some scars on his body. He lives most in villages remote and inaccessible to the rest of the world or in slumps or shanty-towns. The water he drinks is neither safe nor clean. He is either unemployed or under-employed. When he is employed he is overworked and underpaid. He suffers from apathy and ignoring from birth to death, he remains a destitute...if he is a villager he is landless; if he is a town dweller, he rarely has a roof over his head ...he cannot buy books for his children nor pay fees for the school, when he falls ill, he cannot pay fees to a doctor nor can he buy the medicine for himself [4].It is frightening that no fewer than 112

million Nigerians now live below poverty level. According to the latest poverty report by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), about 112 million Nigerians (representing 67.1 percent) of the country's total population of 167 million live below poverty line. Whether this is the reason for the high rate of crime in Nigeria today - armed robbery, stealing, kidnapping etc, remains to be investigated. What is clear is that poverty remains one of the biggest obstacle against social, political and economic development. To tackle this problem past administrations in Nigeria had introduced various programmes to solve or ameliorate its harsh consequences [5]. They are:

- (i) National accelerated food production programme and the Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank in 1972.
- (ii) Operation Feed the Nation; to teach the rural farmers how to use modern farming in 1976.
- (iii) Green Revolution; to reduce food importation and increase local food production in 1979.
- (iv) Directorate of food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) in 1986.
- (v) Family support programme and the family Economic Advancement Programme in 1993.
- (vi) National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), in 2001.
- (vii) The Peoples Bank [6].

It is important to State that any genuine development programme must have as its major task and focus the eradication of poverty. As Dudley Seers stated, development is about, "what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to the unemployed? What has been happening to inequality". One of the objectives of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) is that governments in Nigeria should all work towards the alleviation of poverty. S16 (2) (d) of the constitution under chapter 11 on the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy mandates the State to ensure; that suitable and adequate shelter, suitable and adequate food, reasonable minimum living wages, old age care

and pensions, and unemployment, sick benefits and welfare of the disabled are provided for all citizens [7]. Unfortunately for the poor, the provisions of chapter II of the Fundamental Objective and Directive Principles of State Policy is not justiciable. They are just moral suasions and cannot be enforced in the courts. They are not rights in the mould of rights contained in chapter four of the constitution, and may not mean much to him, that is to a man in utter want and penury. Fundamental Objective and Directive Principles of State Policy is not justiciable. They are just moral suasions and cannot be enforced in the courts. They are not rights in the mould of rights contained in chapter four of the constitution, and may not mean much to him, that is to a man in utter want and penury. As Aguda rightly said: that most of those rights are not more than empty words to those millions who are or whose children are suffering and in some cases dying of malnutrition and other preventable diseases associated with the poor [8]. Claude Ake is in agreement with Aguda. He established a nexus between human rights, democracy and poverty. According to him: for reasons, which need not detain us here, some of the rights important in the west are of no interest and no value to most Africans. For instance, freedom of the press do not mean much to the largely illiterate rural community completely absorbed in the daily rigours of the struggle for survival. If a bill of right is to make sense it must include, among others a right to work and to a living wage, right to shelter, a right to health, to education. That is the least we can strive for if we are going to have a society, which realise basic human rights... granted I have freedom of speech. But where is this freedom, this right. I cannot read. I cannot write. I am too busy trying to survive. I have no time to reflect. I am poor. I am constantly at the mercy of others ...if rights are to be meaningful in the context of a people struggling to stay afloat under very adverse economic and political conditions. Concrete in the sense that their practical import is

visible and relevant to the conclusions of existence of the people to whom they apply. And most importantly, concrete in the sense that their beneficiaries can realise them. The African Charter on Human Rights was blunt on this when it declared that: civil and political rights cannot be disassociated from economic, social and cultural rights... the satisfaction of economic, social and cultural right is a guarantee for the enjoyment of civil and political right [9]. There is undoubtedly a strong link between social, economic and political rights. In the words of Nweze, "an interpretation of human rights that does not accommodate the problem posed by human poverty, misery, want and ignorance must be anaemic and otiose. The question is, what are the causes of poverty? The National Planning Commissions had through its documents, identified many causes of poverty. According to the document; one source of poverty is the lack of basic services, such as clean water, education and health care. Another is lack of assets, such as lands, tools, credit and supportive networks of friends and family. A third is lack of income, including food, shelter, clothing and empowerment (political power, confidence and dignity). Some of these factors directly affect poverty. Others contribute indirectly by producing inequality, by shifting the political power of certain sectors of the population, for example denying them their dignity or human rights. The environment in which people live affects all of these factors. Discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, disability, age or ill-health increased vulnerability to poverty. So do natural or human caused-shocks, market collapse, conflict, droughts or floods? [10]. The Holy Bible has however traced the cause of poverty to the deliberate actions of other men. The poor, it holds, are mainly victims of the oppressive, suppressive and unjustifiable exploitation, manipulation and plunder of the people by their fellow human being. As Isaiah bluntly stated: you who make unjust laws and publish burdensome decrees, depriving the

poor of justice, robbing the weakest of my people their rights, despoiling the widow and plundering the orphan Guatavo Gutierrez had also established areas in the Bible where poverty was traced to actions of human beings against their fellow human beings. They include: fraudulent commerce and exploitation (Hos.12:8; Amos.8:5; Mic.6:10-11; Isa 3:14; Jer. 5:27; 6:12), as well as the hoarding of lands (Mic 2:1-3; Ezek 22:29; Heb 2:5-6), dishonest courts, Amos 5:7; Jer.22:13-17; Mic 3:9-11; Isa.5:23, 10:1-2), the violence of the ruling classes (2kings 23:30,35; Amos 4:1; Mic 3:1-2; 6:12; Jer.22:13-17), Slavery (Neh.5:1-5; Amos 2:6; 8:6), Unjust taxes (Amos 4:1; 5:11-12) and unjust functionaries (Amos 5:17; Jer. 5:28). At the new testaments, Luke (6:24-25; 12:13-21; 16:19-31; 18:18-26) and in letter of James (2:5-9; 4:13-17; 5:16) [11]. Karl Marx, although not from the religious point of view identified the major cause of poverty as inequality and the uneven distribution of wealth and income - a main consequence of capitalism. The economic base he said, determines the superstructure which is made up of the attitude, values, morals, religion and legal relationships of the people in the society. In other words, in any given society Marx asserts, how the means of production is controlled determines the entire life style of that society. In this case poverty is an effect created by those who control the means of production. Poverty for Marx therefore, is economically determined Fighting poverty, it must be noted, is through the process of empowerment which is a multi-dimensional process. It involves "the transformation of the economic, social, philosophical, political and legal circumstances of the powerless"[12]. This section of this work is devoted to examining how Ugwuanyi had deployed the tools of poverty alleviation as veritable instrument for the socio-economic development of the state. A critical examination of his policies in Education clearly shows that Ugwuanyi understood that Education is the bedrock of a nation's development, progress and survival. He prioritised education and placed it at the forefront

of his policies. He believes that education is one sure way to empower the next generation, secure their future and alleviate poverty. Since assumption of office he has consistently been frontally addressing the rot in education and revamping the sector from primary to tertiary institutions. His efforts are concretely visible in the improvement of school infrastructures and renovation of over 400 primary schools, vocational science schools, technical colleges, the provision of instructional materials including computers, capacity building and motivation of teachers by the approval of their promotions and advancements and the recruitment of over 4,000 teachers to ensure effective teaching and learning. These, the teachers themselves confirmed through the state Chairman of Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) Enugu State, Comrade Ozo Paul Nnaji during a solidarity rally, tagged "Teachers for Gburugburu", jointly organised by all the teachers working under the Enugu State Universal Basic Education Board (ENSUBEB), the Post Primary School Management Board (PPSMB) and the Science Technical and Vocational School Management Board (STVSMB). Comrade Ozo, told the Governor that teachers organised the rally "to identify with Governor who has done so much to better the lots of teachers and to promote education in the State" [13]. The teachers noted

"that over ten (10) State governments including some oil producing States are owing their teachers arrears of salaries but Enugu

REVAMPING AND POSITIONING OF STATE-OWNED INSTITUTIONS
Although, this work is not designed to accommodate the humongous strides Ugwuanyi has recorded also in the tertiary sector, it is necessary that some of them be mentioned. On assumption of office, Ugwuanyi promised to revamp and reposition State-owned institutions. As usual and normal with him, he is already matching theory with practice. At the Institute of Management and Technology (IMT), for instance, necessary infrastructures and facilities have been improved, all courses are accredited and it is being upgraded to a degree awarding

State Government has maintained regular payment of salaries and allowances despite her lean resources. Some of the achievements of Ugwuanyi the teachers noted include;

- (i) Regular payment of salaries/allowances of Teachers
- (ii) Regular promotion
- (iii) Recruitment of Teachers
- (iv) Regularisation of the appointment of volunteer teachers
- (v) Resumption of payment of gratuity to primary school teachers.
- (vi) Renovation and construction of new classroom blocks and office complex.

(vii) Sustenance of free and compulsory education policy from primary to JSS 3.

(viii) Maintenance of industrial harmony in the Education sector.

To crown it all, the highly appreciative teachers conferred on the Governor the title, ODOZI OBODO I of Enugu State. What education does is that "it empowers people to take advantage of opportunities, information and life skills they need to realise their potential" . Undoubtedly, therefore, what Ugwuanyi has so far done in the primary and secondary education sector, including training teachers, constructing, reconstructing and rehabilitating schools, recruiting and motivating teachers, sustaining free and compulsory education and removing obstacles that obstruct or prevent children from accessing education are important features of poverty alleviation programmes [4].

university. Enugu State Polytechnic Iwollo is also receiving similar resuscitating treatment [5]. Their courses are now finally accredited by the National Board for Technical Education, and the school is marching towards being garlanded as a degree awarding school also. Enugu State College of Education (Technical) specialised in the training and retraining of teachers in science, technology, vocational subjects and social science has also benefited from Ugwuanyi's determination to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning in all the

tertiary institutions in the state are of acceptable standards. To provide enough space and ambience for the school, Ugwuanyi has approved the relocation of the school to Ihe, in Awgu LGA, and it is being upgraded to a University of Education with all its courses fully accredited. Under a

INCOME REDISTRIBUTION

What Ugwuanyi is doing in the rural areas is what Uwalaka called redistribution imperative, and this is about adopting an economic inclusiveness that would disregard "unlimited accumulation of wealth" in society. Uwalaka had warned that a society: where a few are wallowing in superficialities and majority lacking necessities can never know securities, peace, cohesion and cooperation no matter how stringent the laws are and iron-handed the rulers are. Hence the need for some level of wealth redistribution. At his inauguration on May 29, 2015, Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi did not hesitate to tell the joyous and exalted gathering of Enugu people that "Enugu State under us will pay a special attention to rural development because majority of our people live in the rural areas" [7]. Today, there is no section of the rural populace in the state that has not witnessed or experienced the Governor's imprint by way of one development project or the other, ranging from construction or rehabilitation of health centre, construction of solar powered boreholes, supply of medical equipment and drugs, renovation of secondary school blocks to extension of electricity. By extending development programmes such as roads, bridges and economic facilities to the rural areas, Governor Ugwuanyi made it easy for goods and services and farm produce to move to be moved from the farming communities. On account of what Ugwuanyi has been doing in all the nooks and crannies of Enugu State, the traditional ruler of Umeigbo, Amuri, Nkanu Igwe Fidelis Nsiegbu, highly commended him for his administration's grassroots development programmes which, according to him, have touched the lives of the people of

committee chaired by His Lordship Bishop Godfrey Onah the Adada Campus of the Enugu State University of Technology is also being resuscitated. Both Awgu and Adada are rural areas now being brought to the lime light of development by the siting and or the resetting of these institutions [7].

the State especially the rural dwellers. Amuri community, the monarch said, was before Ugwuanyi's administration tagged "the weeping child of Enugu State" but "is now baptised by Your Excellency, the laughing child of Enugu State". In his words: Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi is a Goodman. He has given the ordinary citizen of Enugu State a sense of belonging. He has remembered the neglected communities in the state, especially my community, which I wish to state without any fear of equivocation, is the most neglected in Enugu State. The Governor is spreading development and good governance across all the nooks and crannies of the State. It is also most appropriate to hear from the Igwe of Ojkor community, Uzo Uwani who gravely lamented that since 1914, his community Ojkor had never witnessed any infrastructural development until Ugwuanyi's government came on board. In his words: I cannot be in a hurry to forget that Ojkor road in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area constructed by FADAMA III World Bank Assisted project as irrigation system for rice cultivation is also work in progress under your ebullient leadership. In fact since the amalgamation of this great country in 1914, nobody thought it wise that my community Ojkor will witness such unprecedented infrastructural transformation. It is not an overstatement to say that Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi of Enugu State deserves thunderous applause. Before now my people have been suffering as a result of dilapidated road, but today our farmers can now transport their farm produce to market due to good road network [7]. There are many more appreciative voices outside Igwe Fidelis Nsiegbu of Amuri and Igwe of Ojkor, in almost the 454 communities in the state. The fact is that in addition

to the cost of over \$40 million spent by the State government in the construction and rehabilitation of about 240km of roads across the three senatorial zones of the State including some federal roads between 2015 and 2018, the State government carried out 35 grass roots project in the 17 Local Government Areas of the State to the

tune of \$100 million per Local Government and further “approved the release of the sum of ₦ 10 million naira to each of the 454 autonomous communities in the State to enable them execute projects that will address their immediate and pressing needs”. This is poverty alleviation in action [10].

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is a veritable and strategic tool for alleviating poverty. It is central to the sustenance and economic diversification efforts of Enugu State government. The people of Enugu are predominantly farmers. It is a source of employment and through it food is placed on the table. A number of strategic steps were taken to ensure that Agriculture has a prime place in the State. Some of the steps are:

- a) The acquisition of 750 hectares of land for distribution to women and young people for large-scale agricultural production.
- b) The construction of 46.89 kilometres of feeder roads in 12 communities where rice is grown across the three senatorial districts.
- c) The provision of critical agricultural inputs such as fertilizer for our local farmers and actively participating in the N2 billion State staple crops processing zone, agricultural programme powered by the Federal Government of Nigeria and the African Development Bank.
- d) The development of Adani irrigation scheme. The only place there is irrigation system in the Southeast.
- e) Participation in the Anchor Borrowers programme in partnership with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) for soft loan for farmers.

f) Distribution of Agricultural lime. It was discovered that our soil is now acidic as a result of very long use overtime. Lime was procured and distributed to farmers to reduce acidity of the soil.

- g) Payment of grants to 300 youths and women under Commercial Agricultural Development Programme for various value chains - poultry, crops like maize and other value chains.
- h) Participation in the World Bank project called Appeals to enhance agricultural products.
- i) Participation in the Accelerated Agricultural Development Scheme for food safety.
- j) The establishment of Integrated Institute, a Songhai value chain initiative at Heneke, Ezeagu LGA
- k) Participation in the FADAMA project. Under this programme, farmers are funded in clusters of cooperative group. Fadama projects do not only fund farmers, they also open up rural areas by funding construction of roads. In programmes and projects where the State is in partnership, the State is obligated to pay counterpart funds to have the programme and project in the State. Enugu State has always demonstrated her commitment to the programmes and projects by paying the required counterpart funds for purposes of alleviating poverty in the State [7].

TRADERS EMPOWERMENT RAFFLE DRAW

This empowerment scheme could be properly called a poverty alleviation scheme. The term empowerment has been defined “as a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power in people for use in their own lives, their communities and in their society... Different local terms associated

with the term empowerment “include self-strength, control, self-power, self-reliance, own-choice, life of dignity in accordance with one values, capable of fighting for one's right, independence, own decision making, being free, awakening and capability - to mention a few. All these may count as Governor Ugwuanyi's reason for instituting the traders' empowerment

Raffle draw. According to him "it was conceived to boost traders' income and further deepen commercial activities in the State". The attention of the reader may be drawn to the following facts:

i) The non-partisan character in the conduct of the empowerment raffle draw. It is not a raffle draw for only traders belonging to the People's Democratic Party. All traders irrespective of party affiliation in any market designated for the exercise are involved. Obviously, another demonstration of Ugwuanyi's humble respect and promotion of the Common Good.

ii) The openness and transparency of the exercise. It is conducted in the open market in the presence of all traders, visitors and spectators. There is no manipulation in the process and it is not designed for the advantage of any person or group of persons.

iii) The exercise is widely spread across major markets or group of markets across the three senatorial zones of the State. No senatorial or geographical area is neglected, all are carried along.

iv) At the end of each draw, the winners or beneficiaries are promptly issued dummy cheques representing the amount they won after which they collect the real cheque for the collection of the prize money. The second phase of the scheme has begun with an annual bumper package of N120 million. This is a 100% increase from the previous N60 million in the first phase. 200 genuine traders will now win N10 million every month against N5 million for 100 traders in the last scheme. In the words of one of the appreciative beneficiaries: The sum will help boost my stock of goods. You cannot imagine how happy I am [8].

ALLEVIATING POVERTY THROUGH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

On September 2015, the United Nations in a summit adopted the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The objective is to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change. Some other goals of the SDG include to end hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture, ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, among other goals. Although goals may be articulated and defined, the question often is, how is it to be implemented? How do they become concrete realities? The SDGs programme is a global agenda and Nigeria as member of the United Nations had found it necessary to key into it with all the financial implications [9]. In a federation like Nigeria, states that are interested in the goals would also key into it with all its funding implications. That is where the difference is made. Fortunately, for the people of Enugu state, Ugwuanyi's administration from inception had focused on poverty alleviation. To ensure the realization

and effective implementation of the global sustainable development goals in Enugu State, Ugwuanyi's administration had entered into a strategic, cooperative and collaborative partnership with the federal government in which Enugu State government had consistently demonstrated uncommon fidelity to partnership and love and concern for the welfare of her citizens by prompt payment of counterpart funds required for the implementation of the goals in Enugu State. A part of the result of the implementation of the scheme was that on 10th April, 2018, about 536 trainees of the second batch of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Skill Acquisition Programme were graduated after attending one-year free vocational training. Each graduand received 100,000 seed money to assist them start off their businesses. 214 trainees were earlier graduated in September 2017. The aim of the training, is to enable the beneficiaries to learn a vocation and imbibe sustainable and self-reliant lives. In the words of the governor to the graduands, the scheme was: Undoubtedly a very important and timely intervention that is helping to create wealth, reduce

unemployment and stimulate productivity especially among our youths and women ...and a welcome complement to the efforts and initiatives of his administration in the area of youths/women empowerment, skills acquisition and poverty alleviation [6]. The Senior Special Assistant to the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on SDGs, Mrs. Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire who was represented by a Director, Pharm Yahaya Hamza commended Governor Ugwuanyi "for being SDGs-friendly and creating enabling environment for achieving the SDGs goals". The Senior Special Assistant further commended Ugwuanyi for his untiring effort in promoting the success of the programme and for his "unique collaboration aimed at accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Enugu State and Nigeria" and subsequently announced that "approval has been granted to the state for continuation of the skill acquisition programme to consolidate the success achieved by the federal and state governments through the initiative". She called on other states to emulate Governor Ugwuanyi. In her words: I also want to encourage other States to borrow a leaf from Ugwuanyi by ensuring that their plans and projects are targeted towards achieving the goals of SDGs, so that our 2030 agenda will be realised as a nation. The graduands were happy, joyous, excited especially as they received credit alerts for N100,000, even while the ceremony was still on going. It may not be easy to adequately describe their overall feelings. However, we can decipher the magnitude from the address they presented at the occasion through their president, Miss Aboh Tochi on behalf of the graduands. According to her: Today is a special day for us, the 2nd Batch graduands of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Skill Acquisition Program. It is my pleasure to welcome you all to this ceremony on behalf of my fellow graduands. It is remarkable to note we have been on the payroll of the SDGs for our transport allowance for 12 months. The monthly stipend gave us

strength and hope and the climax is what we are witnessing today. We, the trainees have been looking forward to this wonderful day with mixed feelings, wondering whether it will ever happen in our life-time [8]. Here we are in the midst of our impeccable leaders and even in the midst of our able Governor. Our Governor, you are a man of his environment, you take your time to ensure that your governance is felt by all and sundry in this State especially the youths. It is on record that many programmes have been mapped out to develop human beings and the youths are in the fore-front. And the greatest development is manpower. "More grease to your elbows".

The saying, don't give one fish, rather teach one how to catch fish has been manifested evidently in our lives. Many of us are now viable in different trades/crafts. For instance, I am now a successful fashion designer. In no distant time, you will be amazed at the capacities we have been able to acquire during our period of training. With the skills we have acquired we can keep ourselves busy with lucrative handiworks without waiting for handout. My Governor, we are proud to say that with your support we are now proud fishermen. Our dear Governor, we want to assure you that we will not let you down. The objective of government in giving us this training is already achieved because we are out of the employment market... In concluding this chapter it is important to state that Governor Ugwuanyi has lived up to his "pledge to deploy government services to create fair and equal opportunity for every willing citizen to make a living and create wealth, educate our children, and enjoy life in a peaceful and secure environment". He has also shown commitment through his policies in theory and practice to "employment generation, enhanced social services and good governance and rural development", all these geared towards poverty alleviation. Ugwuanyi's policies and actions in the rural areas as depicted in Chapter three are also aimed at eradicating poverty [11].

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