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Prerequisite of Good Governance for Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria: Lessons from The Botswana Experience

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Abstract

Nigeria, despite being sixth highest oil producing state of the world, the sixth largest oil revenue, most populated in Africa, seventh in world and with numerous natural and human resources to rank her among world first twenty richest countries is the headquarters of poverty in the world. Poverty level in Nigeria contradicts the country's immense wealth. It remains a cancerous canker worm that has continued to eat deep and deeper into the fabrics of the citizens of this country. Remote and immediate causes of this skyrocketed poverty is a result of poor governance that has remained unabated since independence. The paper takes an empirical review of the extent good governance can help alleviate poverty in Nigeria. The World leaders at the 2005 summit concluded that good governance is integral to economic growth, eradication of poverty, hunger and sustainable development Most third world countries have been identified by the World Bank as chronically groaning under the spell of under-development, rooted in corruption and bad leadership. Data were sourced from secondary source whereas content analysis was adopted; drawing from Botswana experience the findings revealed that application of good governance was abysmally low but can serve as a veritable tool for poverty alleviation if sincere commitment is involved. It is on this premise that the following recommendations were made: there is urgent need to institutionalise and constitutionalise good governance and also enshrine same in Nigeria development plans, among others

Keywords: governance, good governance, poverty, poverty alleviation, Botswana.

Introduction

A new report by the World Poverty Clock shows Nigeria has overtaken India as the country with the most extreme poor people in the world, with 86.9 million people living in extreme poverty representing over 50% of her population and with numerous natural and human resources enough to rank her among the world first twenty richest countries, It is a paradox to assert that Nigeria today, notwithstanding the successive governments' efforts geared towards poverty alleviation is officially the headquarters of poverty in the whole world. The poverty level in Nigeria contradicts the country's immense wealth.

With no scintilla of doubt, poverty is an epidemic and double headed monster that shakes the foundation of peace, progress and economic development of a nation. Poverty has occupied a larger share in the areas of sustainable development and economic growth around the globe. In a statistical fact submitted by Shah (2013), it is

estimated that almost half of the world – over 3 billion people – live on less than \$2.50 a day. He further buttressed that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the 41 Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (567 million people) is less than the wealth of the world's 7 richest people combined; nearly a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their names (Shah, 2013). There have been countless articles written on the shocking rate of extreme poverty and the gruesome implications on a nation.

This is more specific and synonymous with African continent more especially in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The poverty situation in Sub-Saharan African countries is precarious given the percentage of people living below \$ 1 a day; the use of socio-economic indicators like per capita income, life expectancy at birth (years), access to health care services, access to safe water, access to education and access to sanitation facilities also depicts the extent of poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa (Adeyemi, Ijaiya, and Raheem, cited in Leke & Oluwaleye). Nigeria which is one of the Sub-Saharan African Countries is involved in feeding from the clay plate of extreme poverty and sheer underdevelopment.

The trajectory and menace of poverty in Nigeria seems to hit us so hard. A new report by The World Poverty Clock shows Nigeria has overtaken India as the country with the most extreme poor people in the world; the 86.9 million Nigerians now living in extreme poverty represents nearly 50% of its estimated 180 million populations. As Nigeria faces a major population boom—it will become the world's third largest country by 2050—it's a problem will likely worsen, (Yomi, 2018). Furthermore, the National Bureau of Statistics estimated that 112.519 million Nigerians live in relative poverty conditions while other poverty measurement standard, absolute measure, which puts the country's poverty rate at 99.284 million or 60.9 per cent (Onuba, 2012). These are just a tip of iceberg of poverty situation in Nigeria.

By and large, it is paradoxical and incongruous that Nigeria is wallowing in poverty, yet she is the sixth richest oil producing country in the whole world. It is also on record that Nigeria is one of the fastest growing economies in Africa but she is suffering from economic dilapidation. Today, Nigeria has arable lands and vast resources that flow endlessly like the Mississippi river yet we are still called developing country. As espoused by Ogundiya (2010) the country is endowed with abundant natural and human resources which are enough for functional science education. Despite these natural blessings and accumulation, Nigeria is extremely poor. Thus, it becomes glaring that bad governance and bad policies are parasites eating the root of national development in Nigeria. The military regime gave way to a democratic government in 1999, but the suffering was aggravated due to lack of good governance. Thus, the nucleus of this paper focuses the issue of bad governance, its menace and how good governance can alleviate poverty in Nigeria, using Botswana as a case study. Before we dive into these issues, it is important we explain the concept of governance and other variable keywords.

Conceptual Clarifications

Good Governance

Good governance is a concept that has received several definitions and theories from scholars of repute. According to Gray and Khan (2010), the theory of good governance was first developed in response to the need for providing property right in the early 1970s, which was seen as a way to guarantee stability and effective functioning of market economy. Good governance is therefore an antidote to solving many problems that bedevil the global socio-political landscape. What the term itself means does not have any universal interpretation but it seems that most scholars and students of politics and economy universally accede to its efficacy in curbing the menace of underdevelopment (Anyang'Nyong'o, 2001; Chabal, 2002).

For Chabal (2002) the main rationale behind the concept of good governance is the need to build effective government where they do not exist. This leads to an important question: what are the components of effective government? Here effective government entails helping citizens to live a life of high standard. There must be sufficient provision of basic amenities for both the rich and the old. This would enable the people achieve some level of comfort, happiness and spirit of patriotism. Also, the government should endeavour to provide social security for it to be called good government.

The role of good governance in any nation cannot be underestimated. For economic development and sustainable peace to take place, there must be a clear good governance and accountability. Leftwich (1994:372) defined good governance as “a clear and predictable legal framework, accountability, transparency and information on the management of national affairs”. In the context of human development, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2002) defined good governance as “...democratic governance”; meaning respect for human rights, participation in decision making, accountability, poverty eradication, responsiveness, equal treatment, inclusiveness, fairness, impartiality, absence of any discriminatory practices as well as taking into consideration the needs of future generations. The report of poverty task force on localizing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Vietnam defined good governance as “the process of translating societal demands into choices, resulting in policy formulation and implementation”, and thus identifies four good governance principles/indicators that are keys to poverty reduction as accountability, transparency, participation and predictability. More importantly, governance should not be understood as the end result but a means towards an end to promoting the quality of life for all.

Key Governance Indicators

According to Governance Pro (n.d.), Good governance has 8 major governance indicators which include; participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive, and follows the rule of law. Good governance is responsive to the present and future needs of the organization, exercises prudence in policy-setting and decision-making, and that the

best interests of all stakeholders are taken into account. The below explanations of the eight indicators of governance was given by Governance Pro (2010):

1. Rule of Law

Good governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced by an impartial regulatory body, for the full protection of the citizenry.

2. Transparency

Transparency means that information should be provided in easily understandable forms and media; that it should be freely available and directly accessible to those who will be affected by governance policies and practices, as well as the outcomes resulting therefrom; and that any decisions taken and their enforcement are in compliance with established rules and regulations.

3. Responsiveness

Good governance requires that organizations and their processes are designed to serve the best interests of stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe.

4. Consensus Oriented

Good governance requires consultation to understand the different interests of stakeholders in order to reach a broad consensus of what is in the best interest of the entire stakeholder group and how this can be achieved in a sustainable and prudent manner.

5. Equity and Inclusiveness

The organization that provides the opportunity for its stakeholders to maintain, enhance, or generally improve their well-being provides the most compelling message regarding its reason for existence and value to society.

6. Effectiveness and Efficiency

Good governance means that the processes implemented by the organization to produce favourable results meet the needs of its stakeholders, while making the best use of resources – human, technological, financial, natural and environmental – at its disposal.

7. Accountability

Accountability is a key tenet of good governance. Who is accountable for what should be documented in policy statements. In general, an organization is accountable to those who will be affected by its decisions or actions as well as the applicable rules of law.

8. Participation

Participation by both men and women, either directly or through legitimate representatives, is a key cornerstone of good governance. Participation needs to be

informed and organized, including freedom of expression and assiduous concern for the best interests of the organization and society in general.

Towards Improved Governance:

Good governance is an ideal which is difficult to achieve in its totality. Governance typically involves well-intentioned people who bring their ideas, experiences, preferences and other human strengths and shortcomings to the policy-making table. Good governance is achieved through an on-going discourse that attempts to capture all of the considerations involved in assuring that stakeholder interests are addressed and reflected in policy initiatives.

According to Kaumann D., et al. (2007), six indicators of good governance include:

1. Voice and accountability: Citizen Participation, independent media
2. Political stability and lack violence: Threat of state coup
3. Government effectiveness: Quality of civil service
4. Regulatory burden: "Market-unfriendly" policies
5. Rule of law: Perceptions of crime, effective judiciary, enforceable contracts
6. Corruption: Perceptions of corruption

Discourse On Poverty

The word "poverty" has received several definitions from scholars of repute. It may mean an acute shortage of basic needs of man. According to Ekpe (2011), "poverty is general scarcity or dearth, or the state of one who lacks a certain amount of material possessions or money." It is a concept with diverse aspects which includes social, economic, and political elements. Poverty has been described to either be temporary or extreme with relations to the concept of inequality.

According to the United Nations, "poverty is the inability of getting choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to attend. Not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness, and exclusion of individuals, households, and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living in marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation."

Poverty, according to the World Bank (2013), is construed to be a deprivation in the personal well-being of individuals or a group of people. It comprises people with the inability to attain the necessary materials for living and survival resulting from their low incomes. Poverty is also stated to include elements of poor health conditions, low rate of literacy, inaccessibility to drinkable water and safe environment, lack of adequate security and lack of access to lifechanging opportunities, (Melio, 2015).

Analysis of Governance in Nigeria

In Nigeria, good governance, which is the remedy to the problem of underdevelopment and poverty, is suffering from immense deficiency. Of all African countries, Nigeria is the best endowed with all necessary ingredients of development. Skilled labour, natural resources, abundant financial resources, vast agricultural landmass, and favourable geographical and weather conditions are all scarce resources that are abundantly available in Nigeria (Leone, 2010). These abundant resources aren't so vast and rich in most part of African countries it seems paradoxical as these countries are far better than Nigeria. When Nigeria got her independence in 1960, most nationalist seems to be optimistic about the potential of the country; it became a thing of joy in most African countries to see Nigeria as the epitome of hope for black race (Toyin and Matthew, 2008).

The first indigenous election in Nigeria which was held in 1960 paved for democratic governance. Nigeria, given its ethnic diversity and spatial land mass, was compelled to divide the country into three geo-political zones for governance and administrative expediency, whereby each region remitted certain amount of its financial resources to the federal government in Lagos, the best governance system Nigeria had ever operated. Each region was developing at its own pace until the military administration under Aguiyi Ironsi hijacked power in 1966, (Okinono & Mohammed, 2014). The coup resulted in mutual suspicion from principal ethnic groups-Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba (Nyewusira *et al.*, 2008).

The last straw that broke the process of good governance in Nigeria was coup staged the same year by a northerner, Major-General Yakubu Gowon; he abolished regional system and this resulted in the creating of another states under Nigerian federal system, (Ogundiya, 2010). However, we cannot wholly attribute bad governance on military regime in Nigeria; the civilian government has contributed tremendously in fuelling the menace.

The structure, defined in terms of justice, equality, ethnic diversity, accessibility, minority right, freedom, and representation, was collapsed completely. Even when civilian administration regained power in 1979, the decade of bastardisation of the system by military administration could not be restored, (Otega & Mohammed, 2014). The administration structure upon which the pillar of good governance rests became a scarce commodity in Nigeria. Successive Nigerian governments have been intransigent to the yearning of the people and the system could not guarantee any essential means of livelihood (Aboluwodi, 2012). Once the governmental structure had been disturbed since 1966, it is very difficult for any Nigerian government, civilian and military alike, to institute any policy that will benefit the entire citizen, (Otega & Mohammed, 2014). The economy edifice of the country solely relies on oil which can cater for all sections of the society worsen the case; and poverty and underdevelopment are by-products of such ineptitude in governance (Agbiboa, 2011).

What makes bad governance a recurrent feature in Nigerian socio-political landscape is the way in which the mechanism for governance is arranged. The contemporary problems of internal insecurity and political turmoil are the result of decades of structural injustice in Nigeria (Anyanwu, 2012). The structural

malfunctioning therefore resulted in growing poverty and underdevelopment in the country since independence; if this submission is right, then one is safe to assert that bad governance breeds poverty and underdevelopment. In this case, rural underdevelopment is not immune from the pang of bad governance in Nigeria, (Otega & Mohammed, 2014).



Source – Banjo D., (2019).

The above picture clearly states the relationship between poverty and poor governance. Despite the fact that Nigeria has every resources needed to make them the richest country in the world, she is still drowning in ocean of intense poverty arising from bad governance and accountability. Thus, if nothing is done about this issue of bad governance in Nigeria, would continue to wallow in extreme poverty. At this juncture, it is imperative to take a close look at how governance has improved the economic condition of another African country.

The Botswana's Record And Performances in Good Governance

Botswana is one of the world's great development success stories. A small, landlocked country of two million people, According to World Bank 2010. Botswana was one of the poorest countries in Africa with a per capita GDP of about US\$70 when it gained independence from Britain in 1966. In the nearly five decades since, Botswana has transformed itself, moving into the ranks of upper middle-income status to become one of the fastest growing economies in the world, with an average annual growth rate of about 9 per cent.

Botswana takes pride in its mature democracy. Free and fair elections are held regularly and the constitution provides for fundamental rights and freedoms. The Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) has been in power since the first elections were held in 1965.

In our world today, particularly in Africa, good governance has become an issue of discourse. Many African countries find it quite difficult to achieve good governance as a result of political corruption, high level of political instability, conflict and regional disparities, among other things. Many scholars have attested that good governance is a requisite for poverty alleviation. A close look at the history of Botswana agrees with the fact that good governance is essential for national development.

According to David (2010):

To this extent, Botswana is generally acclaimed as a model country on good governance in Africa. Almost all the past assessments at global and the country levels have shown that Botswana's democratic governance which involve transparency, accountability, low levels of corruption and decentralized decision-making structures and programs has been a critical contributor to the country's development success to date. To this extent, Botswana has been exemplary.

Today, Botswana has curbed extreme poverty and as such she has been included as one of the countries that have the finest economy in Africa. This is due to the fact that Botswana has achieved a reasonable level of good governance. The following are some of the key indicators of good governance in Botswana which were extensively explained by David (2010):

Constitutional Setting and Separation Of Powers

Botswana has a comprehensive constitution which enshrines the bill of rights and freedoms. The constitution has been consistently applied and respected. Modifications on the constitution have been minimal and in almost all cases have been meant to extend rather than constrain citizens' democratic rights and freedoms. For instance, the major reforms were effected in 1997 and they successfully enabled the voting age to be lowered from 21 years to 18 years, allowed citizens residing outside the country at the time of elections to vote through the system of postal voting; limited the term of office of the president to two terms of five years and established an independent electoral commission thereby removed that office from the office of the president.

Regular Free and Fair Elections - The Basis of Citizen Empowerment

Botswana has been celebrated globally as a success story of good governance, democratic rule and successful development in the otherwise poorly governed and slow growth sub-Saharan Africa. Indeed good governance has been an important factor in poverty reduction and development in Botswana. Regular free and fair elections have been the hallmark of the country's stability and peace since independence.

The elections have been multiparty participation and with relatively high popular participation. Only in a few instances did the percentage of those who voted fall below 50% of the registered voters. It happened only in 1974 and the allegation was that the concept of regular election had not yet taken root and many people thought they decided on the particular leadership for ever. However, with the exception of 2009 where 52% actually voted 2014, the percentage of actual voters to the total population eligible to vote has been consistently below 50%. This means more potential voters are still not adequately mobilised to vote. Given the ten successive peaceful elections between 1965 and 2009, Botswana boasts of an entrenched democratic electoral culture.

This means citizens have formed allegiance around specific political groupings which presented themselves as political power contenders every time there is an election. Key to good governance is the voters' freedom to choose who to vote for without fear or favour.

Healthy Political Opposition

Politically, Botswana has since independence remained a one party dominant political system with a weak political opposition. The dominance of the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) is partly aided by the lack of a level playing field because political parties are privately funded. The BDP has also largely benefited from the electoral system in use - the first-pass the- post. Moreover, it has benefited from incumbency advantage. Furthermore, the opposition is not only disorganized but it is fragmented.

A weak opposition could have a negative impact on development in the sense that it is not in a position to challenge the policies of the ruling party. If the opposition is weak in turn it may fail to act as a check and balance on the government. In this way, its capacity to demand good governance on government is constrained. However, although an active opposition is an essential attribute in a democracy, a weak opposition could be a strength for the country because that allows a party that is doing well in delivering development an opportunity to continue to implement the policies that are beneficial to a country hence continue to contribute to poverty reduction and human development. Nevertheless, a weak opposition could have a negative impact on the youth, women and minority groups such as Basarwa/ the San especially if the party that is in power does not implement policies that advance the interest of these groups.

A Decentralised and Consultative Governance System

Botswana has an elaborate decentralised system of government. Four local institutions of local councils, district/town administration, tribal administration and land boards all enjoy delegated authority from central government. Of the four, the local councils are the directly elected representative local authority responsible for the provision of primary education, primary health care, local water supply and general development at local level. The other three local institutions play specialised functions such as customary and judicial function in the case of tribal administration,

land allocation by the land boards and co-ordination of central government departments and representation of the latter at local level by the district administration. Below the four local institutions are a myriad of non-governmental organizations, village level committees and other community based organizations whose overall role is to promote local development.

Accountability, Transparency and Good Governance: Impact On Human Development

Botswana has a broad framework of third generation or what has been dubbed “watchdog institutions” in the form of the anti-corruption body, the ombudsman, the independent electoral commission and the relatively elaborate and independent media. The constitution also empowers the auditor general, accountant general and the parliamentary committees to inspect and report on the state and use of public accounts in all government departments and parastatal organizations.

Apart from ensuring the observance of all laws relating to the use of public funds, the Auditor General has the duty to ensure that all necessary precautions are put in place and any improprieties are reported to parliament.

Good Governance and Poverty Reduction: The Relationship and Impacts

Having known the concept of governance and poverty, there is a clear relationship that exists between the two terms. As buttressed by Bappy (2018), the link between good governance and poverty eradication is premised on the presumption that good governance promotes economic growth and development, good governance has an instrumental value, as a means to an end. When there is effective policies and clear implementation of such policies, it goes a long way in providing satisfactory social services for the citizens.

Here, governance must be able to meet all governance indicators both international and national. That is why Bappy (2018) says:

The standards of good governance ought to be applied within the national, global and corporate domains to serve the goals of poverty reduction, sustainable growth, social equality and participation. The assumption is that accountable and transparent government, free and fair elections, the rule of law, and a vibrant civil society are necessary governance qualities for successful implementation of poverty alleviation strategies. These criteria form the core of the ‘good governance’ agenda embraced in a number of policy documents.

Still on the arguments, many recognized organizations and bodies strongly propose that good governance is the key to poverty alleviation because when there are lots of backdrops in governance, it would occur to epileptic governance leading to deprivations or sheer shortage of basic needs of man. In espousal, Bappy (2018) articulated that developed countries and multilateral lending institutions conclude that good governance is a necessary prerequisite for poverty reduction. Without good governance, the scarce resources available are generally not put to their best use in

combating poverty. Good governance alleviates poverty only in middle-income countries, not in least developed ones.

Good governance alone will not end poverty, but we cannot significantly reduce poverty, especially within a human rights approach, without good governance. Good governance is necessary at all levels, from the global to the local, but it is also necessary to identify those levels of governance requiring special attention, (Bappy, 2018).

Thus, the role of good governance in poverty alleviation cannot be overemphasized. It is requisite for economic development and attainment of sustainable development of any nation.

The Menace of Ineffective Governance in Nigeria

- Extreme Poverty
- Political Instability
- Low Standard Of Living
- National Crisis/Social Upheaval
- Outrageous Increase In Crime Rate
- High Rate Of Unemployment
- Human Capital Flight
- Violation Of Fundamental Human Rights
- Bad Recommendation From Outside Nations
- Etc.

Solutions/Recommendations to the Menace of Bad Governance in Nigeria

The following recommendations would play ineffable roles in ameliorating bad governance in Nigeria.

Ensure Transparency At All Levels Of Government In Nigeria.

One of the major problems militating against Nigerian government today is its inability to make clear policies that would favour the interest of her citizens. This has caused many government officials to amass public wealth and make unhealthy policies because it lacks transparency. Against this backdrop, decisions must be taken for and the effects of popular participation must be clear for all to see. Independent ombudsmen, judicial processes and peer-review systems between countries can all help ensure that participatory governance is not just tokenistic.

Participatory Mechanisms at all Levels of Governance

In line with the provisions set out in the Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights: “States must ensure the active, free, informed and meaningful participation of persons living in poverty at all stages of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of decisions and policies affecting them ...Particular care should be taken to fully include the poorest and most socially excluded persons.”

Communities Participation in Governance

Participation cannot be imposed, and time must be taken to listen to entire communities, not just community 'leaders'. Building the capacity of communities to self-organise and build links with wider society should be a priority. The role of CSOs that provide space for people living in poverty to speak with their own voices and take part in decision-making processes should be recognised.

Conclusion

Nigeria is a country replete with natural and material resources. Nigeria is one of the fastest growing economies in Africa but it still remains paradoxical how this richly blessed country is feeding from the clay plate of extreme poverty and underdevelopment. From the ongoing, it has been proven that Nigeria is drowning in bad governance which has been the root causes of extreme poverty. Against this epileptic backdrop, various researchers have submitted that achieving good governance in Nigeria is the only prerequisite ground for poverty alleviation. Using Botswana as a case study, good governance would ensure that satisfactory social services and preservation of citizens' rights, which include freedom of political participation and free speech, among other things. When Nigeria understands that good governance is a tool to curbing poverty in Nigeria, we would build an economy devoid of underdevelopment and exploitations.

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