

Measuring Poverty in Nigeria

**Sofo C.A. Ali-Akpajiak
and Toni Pyke**

oxfam working papers

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Preface

This report was commissioned by Oxfam Great Britain (GB) in order to obtain contextual information about the prevalence and nature of poverty in Nigeria. The need for it arose during the initial stage of developing a new programme for Oxfam GB, when it was felt that although there was no shortage of written materials on the topic, it was necessary to summarise their findings in one comprehensive document which would help Oxfam and other development organisations to make relevant contributions to the alleviation of poverty in Nigeria.

The need for this report became even more evident when Oxfam undertook to support the role of civil society in governance through the Poverty Reduction Strategy Process (PRSP). It was felt that in order for civil society in Nigeria to engage meaningfully with the PRS process, civil society must have a common perspective on poverty. An understanding of the underlying causes, contributing factors, and processes was felt to be a prerequisite. To this end Oxfam made a modest financial contribution and commissioned two consultants, who carried out a desktop review of written materials gathered from various sources, including research institutions, civil-society organisations, bilateral and multilateral institutions, government organisations, and individuals.

In order to ensure that the report was credible and that its contents reflected the views of the diverse geopolitical, social, and ethnic mix of Nigerian civil society, Oxfam facilitated a meeting for a core team of members of civil-society organisations, drawn from the six geopolitical zones of the country, who discussed the initial draft report with the consultants. Then a second draft report was produced, and a wider representation of civil society, drawn from all 36 states and the Federal Capital Abuja, met in a national workshop to review the report, make relevant input into the contents, and endorse the final text. Oxfam plans to commission a second edition, designed to analyse the underlying causes and gender-related dimensions of poverty, during the year 2003.

Oxfam acknowledges that this document has been made possible through the collaborative

efforts of various stakeholders. In particular, we thank representatives of civil society in Nigeria for their significant contribution. Specific thanks are extended to the co-ordination committee, who discussed and made invaluable comments on the initial draft, as well as the participants in the National PRSP, held in Kaduna, who reviewed the report and made further contributions before the final report was produced.

We especially thank Mr Sofo C.A. Ali-Akpajiak and Ms Toni Pyke, the consultants, who had to work through a tremendous amount of literature in order to produce this document.

Last and not least we thank Dr Cline-Cole, lecturer at the Centre for West African studies at the University of Birmingham, England, for his valuable input – and our colleagues at Oxfam House for editing and publishing the report.

This Working Paper summarises information gathered from a wide range of secondary sources. The views expressed do not necessarily represent the opinions of Oxfam, or those of the authors.

*Oxfam Programme Team
Abuja, Nigeria
February 2003*

Abbreviations

CBN	Central Bank of Nigeria	ISP	Internet Service Provider
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women	IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
CPPC	Centre for Private–Public Co-operation	MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment	MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
FEPA	Federal Environment Protection Policy	NEPAD	New Partnership for African Development
FGN	Federal Government of Nigeria	NDHS	Nigerian Demographic Health Survey
FOS	Federal Office of Statistics	OPEC	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
GDI	Gender Development Index	PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Process
GEM	Gender Empowerment Index	SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
GNP	Gross National Product	SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
GSM	Global System for Mobile Communication	TFR	Total Fertility Rate
HDI	Human Development Index	UBE	Universal Basic Education
HPI	Human Poverty Index	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
ICT	Information and Communications Technology	UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
IMF	International Monetary Fund	U5MR	Under-5 Mortality Rate
IPRS	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy	WB	World Bank
		WSC	World Summit for Children

Exchange rate: £1 = N200 (on average, during the period of research).



1 Context of the report

Oxfam is a charity, founded in Great Britain to support people worldwide in their efforts to overcome poverty and suffering. It works in more than 80 countries, responding to emergencies caused by war and natural disasters, and assisting people with long-term support to enable them to take control of their own lives. Oxfam also supports campaigns to challenge and reform the injustices that create and perpetuate poverty and suffering. Where possible, Oxfam collaborates with other organisations – from small community groups to government departments – to increase its impact.

Oxfam Great Britain (GB) has recently established an operational office in Nigeria after a period of data collection and analysis. Oxfam has also been supporting the work of various local partners. It was the need to consolidate the work of these partners, as well as to engage fully with the various actors in the national arena, that culminated in the decision to establish a permanent presence in Nigeria. Having an in-country presence means developing a coherent and consistent programme which takes into consideration the prevailing economic situation. Oxfam plans to develop a programme which fits into its regional programme for supporting sustainable livelihoods, with a focus on trade, as well as exploring the possibilities of doing humanitarian relief work. In order to inform the process of developing such a programme, the decision was taken to commission a review of the broad parameters of poverty in Nigeria.

Oxfam recognises the important role which civil-society organisations can play and is working jointly with the Centre for Public–Private Co-operation (CPPC), based in Ibadan, on an initiative which will empower civil-society organisations to map out entry points for advocacy and practical engagement with other players. This review of poverty in Nigeria is meant to help to inform civil-society organisations about the Poverty Reduction Strategy Process (PRSP) and help them to define areas of engagement.

The overall aim of the review is to provide concise background facts and analytical information on poverty in Nigeria in relation to six

key areas: socio-cultural, political, economic, environmental, and technological issues, and also issues related to the regional position of Nigeria in West Africa. Such an analysis should inform the national conference on Poverty Reduction Strategy, as well as the Oxfam GB programme. The authors were commissioned to review written and electronic materials and summarise the main causes of poverty in Nigeria; in so doing, to emphasise trade relations, gender-related constraints, and conflict, and to highlight their role in creating or perpetuating poverty; and to identify gaps in the existing analysis of poverty and recommend ways of addressing them.

The review process involved a desk study of materials and documents collated by Oxfam GB. Oxfam provided the logistics required for the exercise and recruited an assistant to collect additional information from relevant agencies and ministries. The consultants were also involved in gathering materials for the study.

The consultants experienced several constraints on their research and analysis. First, the unreliability of available data made it difficult to provide an in-depth analysis of poverty in Nigeria and thus to devise strategies for poverty alleviation. Also, the conflicting information presented in available data made it difficult to provide a true representation of the underlying causes of poverty in the country. An in-depth analysis which provides a true reflection of the situation to date has yet to be conducted. This deficiency of information made it difficult to provide a sufficiently detailed poverty analysis in the areas of trade, conflict, and technology.

Secondly, the democratic process in Nigeria is relatively new, and it is probably too soon to analyse the effectiveness of the democratic system in general and poverty-focused policies in particular.

Finally, it is important to note that the information compiled in this report is based on secondary sources and views expressed by civil society in Nigeria.

2 Executive summary

Geography and population

Nigeria has a landmass extending over 923,768 square kilometres, and an estimated population of 115-120 million¹ people. The average density is approximately 124 persons per square kilometre,² making Nigeria one of the most densely populated countries in the world. It has been claimed that one out of every five Africans is a Nigerian. In global terms, Nigeria is said to constitute 2 per cent of the world population and is expected to be among the five or six most populated countries in the world by 2025.³

The spatial distribution of the population is uneven, with some areas of the country sparsely inhabited and other areas densely populated. With the exception of Lagos, which has the highest population density in the country, the South East of Nigeria has the highest densities. The majority of the population— 64 per cent – is concentrated in the rural areas, leaving approximately 36 per cent living in the urban areas.⁴

There are an estimated 374 different ethnic nationalities in Nigeria, each speaking its own language and contributing to an interdependent society which is rich in culture and diversity.⁵ There are two major religions in Nigeria, namely Christianity and Islam, to which almost equal proportions of the population adhere, with the remaining share absorbed by traditional African religions.

Economy

Nigeria has remained heavily dependent on an unpredictable oil sector, to the detriment of the many other natural resources yet to be fully exploited. Income generated from oil has totalled more than \$320 billion since 1970. Nigeria pumps on average 2.2 million barrels of oil a day, which accounts for 95 per cent of its export earnings.⁶ Yet this oil wealth has been squandered, mismanaged, and stolen by a corrupt few who have 'infected the moral fabric of society, contributing to group rivalries and a loss of national direction'.⁷ Nigeria's agricultural

potential has sadly been neglected over the years, a fact which has obliged the country to import foods that it used to export. Manufacturing industry has also suffered from a serious lack of investment. Nigeria's economic indicators have fluctuated over two decades, with minor improvements in growth rates. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was estimated to reach 2.7 per cent in 1999, which was 3 per cent below its target for the year. Agricultural production rose by only 0.2 per cent in 1999; industrial production fell by 1.4 per cent, with industrial capacity utilisation assessed at just 31 per cent.⁸ Nigeria is highly vulnerable in terms of food security; the heavy burden of balance of payments and a legacy of unrelenting external debt-repayment demands have impeded development. The poor economic base and political instability of the country have driven out many skilled professionals.⁹ Nigeria has thus been described as a society in transition, situated 'halfway between the traditional world of the pre-capitalist, pre-colonial past and the modern world of urban life, industry and global communications'.¹⁰

Politics

Nigeria is governed under a three-tier Federal structure, comprising 36 State Governments, 774 Local Government Areas (LGAs), and Federal Capital Territory located at the centre of the country at Abuja. The States are grouped into six geopolitical zones, and the LGAs are grouped into emirates, districts, or traditional council areas, especially in areas of the far North.¹¹

Compared with other countries on the continent, Nigeria has experienced the greatest number of violent changes in government since its independence from colonial rule in 1960. Nearly 30 years of military dictatorship have denied the country its full potential. The first military coup, which occurred in January 1966, led to the three-year Biafran civil war, which cost the lives of more than one million people. The era of military dictatorship denied Nigerians

their political rights and compromised their universal human rights. The gross mismanagement and theft of government resources plunged the people deeper into poverty and caused great damage to Nigerian society. It has earned Nigeria the title of one of the four most corrupt countries of the world, ranked by Transparency International at 1.9, on a scale where 10 is the least corrupt.¹²

The democratic challenge

After 16 years of continuous military rule, Nigeria installed a new democratic government on 29 May 1999 under the leadership of President Chief Olegosun Obasanjo. Nigeria's newly appointed President vowed that 'never again will this country sink into the abyss of the recent past when human rights abuse was the order of the day'.¹³ Few would deny the challenge that lies ahead: the task of overhauling an ailing nation in decline after years of neglect and abuse. Since taking office, the government has already made improvements in the areas of tackling corruption and ensuring civil and political rights, through the establishment of several bodies such as the Anti-corruption Commission, the Human Rights Commission, the Human Rights Violation Commission, and the Niger Delta Development Commission. Also, the government has made attempts to address the country's poverty by approving strategies such as the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), and it is currently working to produce an Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

Change, however, is slow to come about, and direct improvements in the standard of living for Nigerians are not yet apparent in terms of access to social services, infrastructure, or employment opportunities. Nigeria's performance, measured by social-welfare indicators, is increasingly among the worst in sub-Saharan Africa and throughout the developing world.¹⁴ Estimations have been made to quantify and calculate indices and statistics in relation to Nigeria's overall development. Much of the available data is based on statistics gathered from the 1991 Census, and clearly much has changed since then. Many of the United Nations reports and other literature acknowledge the shortage of reliable data, which has hindered the gathering of accurate development indexes.

In spite of Nigeria's abundant natural prosperity and oil wealth, the poverty of its

people is increasing. It is 'serious and extensive—to differing degrees—in all parts of the country and within all the states'.¹⁵ It is estimated that 70 per cent¹⁶ of the population is living below the poverty line in both rural and urban areas. Although the agricultural sector has suffered a decline over the years, it continues to employ 70 per cent of the active labour force and contributes to 40 per cent of GDP.¹⁷ Deterioration in infrastructure, poor distribution of agricultural inputs, and their subsequent high costs are further hampering development. Nigerians have been forced to devise their own strategies to cope with the relentless poverty and inequality that ravage their country.

Framework of the report

In light of the issues outlined above, the aim of this report is to identify and assess the current social, political, environmental, economic, and technological situation in Nigeria and the causes of the prevailing and widespread poverty. It is imperative to point out that all the factors are interlinked, and that no one area can be isolated for overall responsibility for the underlying causes of poverty in Nigeria. Neglect in one area has consequences for the others. This report will consider each factor and determine its role in augmenting Nigeria's poverty.

Social context and poverty

The report begins with an attempt to define poverty and 'the poor'. Chapter 3 looks at poverty in Nigeria today and provides alarming statistics on human development and social provision which demonstrate that the population of Nigeria is increasingly becoming among the poorest in the world, and that Nigeria as a whole is in a very vulnerable position.

Politics

Understanding Nigeria's political history is crucial in assessing its current poverty climate and formulating appropriate policies for poverty alleviation. Although Nigeria earns substantial income from oil exports, corrupt management of that income and over-reliance on oil exports have brought little benefit to the masses and have concentrated wealth in the hands of an elite minority. The report will review the country's evolving political structures to date and consider their impact on poverty in Nigeria. Chapter 4 examines the obstacles facing the new

democratically elected government since its installation in 1999 and assesses any improvements in the living conditions of poor communities.

Economy

Past economic policies have neglected the social sector and intensified poverty. Chapter 5 assesses national economic policies and relates them to poverty in Nigeria. Also, it considers the current administration's proposed economic reforms and their prospects of alleviating poverty.

Trade

Trade plays a crucial role in the formulation of economic policy. Chapter 6 assesses the impact of Nigeria's import and export trade on the economy as a whole. It reviews the government's economic reform plans for diversification in the future and their potential impact on poverty. The effects of globalisation on Nigeria, the institutional dimensions of trade management, and the role of civil society are also explored in this chapter.

Environment

Former economic policies and political instability have had disastrous effects on the environment. Chapter 7 assesses the link between Nigeria's past policies and poverty. It focuses on core environmental issues and considers the challenges of managing the environment and formulating policy.

Women

Socially, the lives of many Nigerian women are plagued by ignorance, illiteracy, high fertility, and a lack of recognition. Economically they are generally poor, underemployed, and unfairly rewarded. Politically they are ignored: there are insufficient numbers of women in positions of power to enable the voices of poor women to be heard. Chapter 8 assesses the specific effects of poverty on women in Nigeria.

Technology

The antiquated technological sector in Nigeria, which is uncompetitive and expensive to maintain, has hampered Nigeria's development. The final chapter of the report analyses the importance of improved technology in attaining sustainable poverty alleviation.

3 Social development and poverty in Nigeria

Introduction

Years of military rule, fiscal neglect, and mismanagement have compounded the incidence of poverty in Nigeria. The lack of investment and commitment to the social sector are among the worst in Africa. Nigeria has focused just 0.2 per cent of GDP on health care and 0.7 per cent on education, which has left 69 per cent of the population living below the 'official' poverty line.¹⁸ This chapter will focus on the current state of Nigeria's social sector and show how it has compounded the problems of poor people. It begins by attempting a definition of poverty and attempts to identify 'the poor'. In analysing the various development indices and taking a closer look at the condition of the social sector, it reveals that although Nigeria is the seventh-largest exporter of oil in the world, it is one of the poorest countries in terms of human development.

Poverty

'Poverty is a plague afflicting people all over the world. It is considered one of the symptoms or manifestations of underdevelopment.'¹⁹ Before appropriate and effective poverty-alleviating policies and strategies can be identified, it is crucial to begin with an understanding of poverty, its victims, and its manifestations. However, understanding poverty and identifying 'the poor' is not a simple task. There is no agreed universal definition of poverty. Poverty is 'complex and multidimensional'²⁰ and has 'various perceptions'.²¹ It is experienced differently by men and by women and can differ according to geographical area, social group, and political or economic context. Therefore, it is safe to agree that the poor 'are not a homogenous group'.²²

Identifying 'the poor'

In order to identify, calculate, and formulate appropriate policies for poverty alleviation, some attempt should be made to offer a definition of poverty and identify the target population. Onibokun and Kumuyi in *Urban Poverty in Nigeria* (1996) argue that poverty is linked to a

shortage of vital resources and the endurance of 'harsh and inhospitable environments', including the breakdown of economic, demographic, ecological, cultural, and social systems, and 'bad governance', which they claim sustains systemic poverty in developing countries. Poverty is caused when a 'distortion becomes so pronounced that people, groups and countries lose their capacity to adapt, change and survive'.²³ Examples include communities living in the oil-producing areas in the south of Nigeria who were displaced by pollution, or the migration from rural to urban areas which undermines infrastructural facilities. A concluding definition recognises poverty as '*a way of life characterised by low calorie intake, inaccessibility to adequate health facilities, low quality education system, low life expectancy, high infant mortality, low income, unemployment and underemployment and inaccessibility to various housing and societal facilities*'.²⁴ In real terms, poverty denies its victims the most basic needs for survival, which are fundamental human rights, such as water, food, clothing, and shelter.²⁵ Therefore it 'manifests itself not only in economic deprivation but also in terms of an individual's inability to access basic social amenities'.²⁶

Levels of poverty

Numerous indices can be used to assess income levels and categorise individuals in terms of their poverty ranking, but poverty itself is not easy to define. A UNDP report²⁷ warns of the danger of discounting a hierarchy of poverty which demands the identification and inclusion of all sections of society; the report observes that general strategies for poverty alleviation may not incorporate the needs of all poor people. According to the report, 'the poorest among the poor are people who are the worst off in terms of physiological deprivation', suffering from income poverty, social exclusion, and a lack of freedom. The report concludes with a definition of the poor as '*those who are unemployable and are unskilled, whose daily meals cannot be guaranteed except with the assistance of others because their incomes are extremely low or nil*'. The report makes

it clear that the definition is not exhaustive and goes on to list sectors which may not be included when statistics are gathered: people such as beggars, disabled people, homeless people, unemployed people, and those living in poverty because they have been the victims of theft.²⁸

Income poverty

However, in practice the most common and preferred definition in determining a country's level of poverty is derived from the economists' concept of 'income poverty', which assesses the poor as people living in 'absolute' or 'relative' poverty. A person is in a state of 'absolute' poverty when his or her level of income is insufficient to provide the basic necessities for life. Someone is considered to be in 'relative' poverty when he or she appears to have more than someone who is in absolute poverty, yet has less than others have in terms of income, property, and other resources. For statistical analysis and formulation of policy, the most common and universal measurement (not without its critics for being subjective) defines a person as poor if he or she is living below the 'poverty line'. The most widely accepted means of calculating and assessing poverty, the poverty line is universally set at US \$1 a day, although each country is urged to set its own particular level. In global terms there are an estimated 1.3 billion people living below the poverty line, of whom nearly half are living in sub-Saharan Africa.²⁹

Social context

Based on an annual increase of 2.9 per cent, revealed by the 1991 Census statistics, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and UNDP project Nigeria's population to be between 115 and 120 million people. It is expected that this number will double in less than 25 years, given high fertility rates, averaging 5.2 children per woman. However, the actual statistics may be higher, due to the non-reporting of births.³⁰ The average life expectancy of a Nigerian is between 52 and 54 years,³¹ but more than one third of Nigerians are not expected to live beyond the age of 40.³²

Poverty in Nigeria

All documentation, official or otherwise, shows that poverty in Nigeria in all forms is rising at an increasingly fast pace. Nigeria's social statistics rank it among the worst in sub-Saharan Africa,

even though it possesses the greatest natural resources. The World Bank has observed that the poor of Nigeria have 'a cash income [that] is insufficient to cover minimum standards of food, water, fuel, shelter, medical care and schooling'.³³ Given that Nigeria is the seventh largest exporter of oil in the world, these revelations are distressing. All commentators agree that the causes and effects of poverty in Nigeria are far-reaching, diverse, and complex. This was remarked in a recent UNDP publication, which commented: 'the inescapable picture of Nigeria as one of the poorest countries in the world is not in doubt ... she is worse off today than in the 1980s.'³⁴ 'The poverty profile of Nigeria does indeed present a very sombre picture of a rich nation in decline.'³⁵

Table 1, taken from a recent publication by the Central Bank of Nigeria, illustrates the increasing incidence of poverty across the country.

Table 1: Incidence of poverty by geopolitical zones ³⁶

Geopolitical zone	Percentage		
	1985/6	1992/3	1997
North East	53.2	N/A	68.0
North West	48.4	N/A	62.0
Middle Belt	48.4	N/A	53.0
South East	30.9	N/A	79.5
South West	42.0	N/A	74.1
South South	38.0	N/A	78.6
Nationwide	43.0	34.10	69.2

Income poverty in Nigeria

Given the absence of an 'official' poverty line for the purposes of measurement, the World Bank and the Federal Office of Statistics have established that a *two-thirds mean per capita household expenditure* would determine the **poverty line** in Nigeria, whereas a *one-thirds mean per capita household expenditure* would indicate **extreme poverty**. In monetary terms at 1996/97 prices, the above formula translates into N658 (US \$8.20) per month as the poverty line, and N320 per month (US \$4.00) as an indication of extreme poverty. Given these figures, it is estimated that 55.8 million Nigerians (48.5 per cent of the population) are living below the poverty line. These figures also indicate that Nigerians are living well below the universal poverty line of US \$1 a day. The World Bank (1996) gives a higher estimate of 66 per cent of the population

living in poverty, while the Central Bank of Nigeria (1997) reported that 69.2 per cent of the population were poor. The 2001 UNDP *Human Development Report* remarked that poverty in Nigeria has 'been exacerbated' since these statistics were obtained, and cites recent estimates that two-thirds of the population in Nigeria are experiencing income poverty. Studies conducted in urban and rural settings support these estimates and reveal a general response that poverty has increased in the last ten years. Urban dwellers in the North East, for example, believed that 62 per cent of their population were poor, while respondents in the South East felt that 45 per cent were poor. In the rural areas, those in the North East felt that 50 per cent of them were poor, and the corresponding figure for the South East was 54.5 per cent. While a greater number of the nation's poor are said to live in the rural areas, the poverty gap between rural and urban populations has been closing since 1992, with continued and large-scale rural-urban migration. Current statistics rank the total rural poor at 56 per cent, while the urban poor constitute 43 per cent.³⁷

Income inequality in Nigeria

A measure of inequality within a country is calculated by the Gini index. A UNDP report³⁸ explains that Nigeria's Gini Coefficient is close to 1, revealing that a great proportion of the national income is eluding the poor. The poverty gap in Nigeria is widening, and a greater proportion of the nation's wealth is being concentrated in the hands of the wealthiest 20 per cent of the nation. In Nigeria it is thought that the highest income-earning status is enjoyed by just 10 per cent of the population, who have a 31.4 per cent share of the total national income. The poorest 10 per cent receive just 1.3 per cent. Nearly 50 per cent of the total national income is owned by 20 per cent of the highest income-earning group. An estimated 20 per cent of the poorest portion of the population own 4 per cent of the total national income.³⁹ As the report comments, this widening gap of inequality further marginalises the poor and may serve as a breeding ground for conflict, civil strife, and political instability—a prospect that Nigeria's initial attempts at democracy can ill afford.

Human development in Nigeria

In determining a country's measure of poverty, the Human Poverty Index (HPI), Human Development Index (HDI), Gender Development Index (GDI), and Gender Empowerment Index (GEM) are utilised. Nigeria's statistics on development are discouraging, and the situation can only get worse if appropriate poverty-alleviation systems are not put in place.⁴⁰

Human Poverty Index, Human Development Index

The HPI concentrates on calculating deprivation in terms of 'longevity' (survival rates), 'knowledge' (rates of illiteracy), and 'standard of living' (access to basic services).⁴¹ Similarly, the Human Development Index (HDI) measures the incidence of human poverty in a country. Nigeria's HPI is 41.6, which ranks it 54th out of the 78 poorest countries in the world in terms of the provision of education and services such as potable water, public-health measures, and sanitation.⁴² Nigeria's HDI index is 0.456, ranking it 156th in the world. The UNDP suggests that Nigeria 'at the dawn of the third millennium and the twenty-first century...[is] among the lowest of the low'.⁴³ The 23 countries with HDI ranks below Nigeria are the least developed in Africa.

Gender Development Index, Gender Empowerment Index

The Gender Development Index (GDI) assesses disparities between males and females in relation to the HDI result. The closer the GDI to the HDI, the lower the gender disparity prevailing in a country. In adjusting the measure for gender analysis, the statistics show that Nigeria's GDI is 0.425, ranking the country 124th in the world.⁴⁴ Women generally live longer than men, although men are better off in terms of knowledge (literacy) and income. The income disparity between men and women in Nigeria shows that the real GDP per capita of women is only 42.8 per cent of that of men and is lower than the average for sub-Saharan Africa (54.9 per cent).⁴⁵ The Gender Empowerment Index (GEM) measures the gender inequality in economic and political opportunities in a country; it focuses on the mechanisms available which would empower men and women to take advantage of these opportunities. The GEM should reinforce and increase the GDI. The GEM is 0.456 for men and 0.442 for women, which shows that men are marginally better off than women in Nigeria.⁴⁶

The experience of poverty in Nigeria

The concept of poverty as linked to present and future feelings of insecurity is now widely cited and is reiterated in the World Bank's *World Development Report 2000-2001*, which conducted consultations through direct participatory research with 16 communities across Nigeria. The report highlights how the poor in Nigeria experience and understand their poverty. It discovered that poverty was expressed less in terms of quantifiable, material criteria and more in terms of qualitative, subjective criteria. The study demonstrated that the poor experienced poverty as social and personal isolation, which made them feel insecure, vulnerable, and powerless. A breakdown in communality forced a heavy reliance on the individual and the extended family, compounding the isolation that sometimes led to conflict. Respondents revealed their feelings of insecurity and its subsequent effects on their health, leading to tension and aggravating violence. The idea of being wealthy was viewed in urban areas as having a 'secure life and peace of mind', together with access to essentials such as food, health care, and education, living in good accommodation, and having access to opportunities which in turn enabled offspring to access such services and be rich. The poor were perceived as lacking security, living in poor housing, having no access to essential services, and being perpetually in debt and constantly having to borrow. In rural areas, wealth was expressed in terms of land ownership and capital availability, along with access to markets. Both urban and rural respondents stated that security allowed an individual to have status and dignity — in contrast to the poor, who had none.

External influences on poverty

One should not endeavour to provide a picture of poverty without reference to the global economic circumstances that have compounded the inability of some developing countries to haul themselves out of poverty. As Onibokum points out, populations and governments in developing countries, including Nigeria, have an aggravated burden of debt which 'mortgages a large part of export earnings and considerably restricts their already limited economic possibilities'.⁴⁷ Nigeria's external debt amounts to US \$28bn, of which US \$6.6bn is owed in

interest and penalties to the Paris Club— although this figure is disputed by some as an underestimation. Various Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) prescribed by the International Monetary Fund, seeking to restructure an ailing economy, have had catastrophic consequences for the majority of the population. The decline in government expenditure on social services has served to aggravate the incidence of poverty.⁴⁸ True, the rate of economic growth increased from 1.8 per cent to 5.4 per cent, but 'absolute' poverty also increased, along with the proportion of those living in 'extreme' poverty, which rose by 12-14 per cent.⁴⁹ The policy of foreign-exchange rate-conversion forced an increase in the cost of critical goods and services. The removal of subsidies on social services meant that the costs of education and health care were seriously affected. An increase in the cost of imports and the undermining of manufacturing capacity led to an increase in inflation. Currently capacity utilisation in manufacturing is just 35 per cent. The diversion of scarce foreign exchange to dubious speculative activities intensified capital flight, worsened income-distribution patterns, and further marginalised and deprived the poor.⁵⁰

Health services in Nigeria

Nigerian governments have in the past made insufficient allocations to the social sector. Erratic disbursements and allocations to education, for example, went mainly to tertiary colleges, bringing little benefit to the poor, who can barely afford primary education. In relation to health care, the biggest allocation went to service personnel costs, rather than materials and medicine. The statistics for Nigeria's health-care system, education provision, and infrastructural development presented below reveal much about the poor living conditions of the general population.

The evolution of Nigeria's public-health service began with the 10-year colonial administration plan from 1946 to 1956, when treatment was required for soldiers of the West African Frontier Force and the colonial administration staff. Subsequent health-sector plans were adaptations of preceding plans. It was not until 1975 that an attempt was made to embrace the provision of primary health care to all Nigerians under the Basic Health Services Scheme (BHSS). The BHSS aimed to increase access to health care in terms of affordability, location,

and distribution of services, increase access to preventative health care, and provide an adaptable service based on local needs and technology.⁵¹

The current health-care system

Over the last two decades, Nigeria's health-care system has deteriorated – a fact attributed to the country's poor governance and leadership during the military era. This was reflected in budget allocations and the fiscal requirements of the Structural Adjustment Programmes. The lack of reliable data makes it difficult to provide an holistic assessment of the degree of financial commitment provided at all levels. In terms of Federal Government spending, funding for the health sector during the period 1990–1998 constituted 1–2 per cent of GDP, according to government sources. The World Bank, however, estimates that the true figure was 0.2 per cent for the same period.⁵² The present government's budget for health care for the year ending 2000 was N17,582 million, constituting 2.7 per cent of the annual federal budget. This amount increased from N13,737 million from the previous year, but was a reduction of 1.8 per cent in the overall budget commitment.

The decline of the health-care sector in Nigeria was accompanied by the collapse of institutional capacity, due partly to the 'brain drain' phenomenon which drove many of Nigeria's qualified professionals to seek employment overseas, partly to the poor motivation of remaining staff, and partly to the generalisation of corrupt practices.⁵³ In response, many of the subsequent health-care provisions were donor-led. Figures for 1999 reveal that 14 different health-care policies, 16 individual programmes, and 11 agencies and departments were created to manage donor-led health-care programmes.⁵⁴ Due to the political crisis, aid sanctions, and the end of donor funding in the 1990s, the health-care system virtually collapsed. This has led to an increase in the provision of private health care, concentrated mainly in urban areas and utilised by middle- to high-income earners. In 1999 these accounted for 31 per cent of primary health care and 75 per cent of secondary health-care provision.⁵⁵

The Central Bank of Nigeria in a recent appraisal stated that the 'performance of the social services sector remained unsatisfactory in 2000'.⁵⁶ In terms of health care, it revealed statistics which demonstrated the poor provision of services to the general population. In terms

of the ratio of hospital staff to patients, there were 4529 patients per physician, an increase from 4479 the previous year, and 920 patients per staff-nurse, up from 906 the previous year. There are 1611 patients competing for each hospital bed, an increase from 1564 in the previous year's statistics.

Types of health-care provision

There are three levels of health-care provision in Nigeria—Federal, State, and Local Government Area (LGA). The Federal government sets policies and guidelines on health and family planning. States determine policies for service provision. Implementation and provision are the responsibility of the Local Government Area. LGAs provide primary health-care facilities, based in clinics and health centres, such as maternal and child-care services, preventative care, and basic curative treatment. State governments provide secondary-level care in district hospitals for curative and some preventative services. The Federal Government controls the tertiary level, which includes teaching hospitals.⁵⁷

There are 10,149 primary health-care centres in Nigeria, 936 secondary health-care centres, and 51 tertiary health-care centres. Table 2 shows the types of health-care facility available to Nigerians.⁵⁸ General hospitals and small clinics are the dominant health-care facilities patronised by households throughout the country. More than 33 per cent of Nigerians use general hospitals, and nearly 27 per cent patronise clinics. However, a rural/urban analysis shows that the general hospitals are predominantly utilised by urban dwellers (50 per cent), whereas only 16.2 per cent of patients are rural dwellers, probably due to the absence of local hospitals. Clinics were accessed by 32.9 per cent of the population in rural areas and by only 16.3 per cent of urban dwellers. Traditional medicine continues to be important for Nigerians. In response, the present administration has established a Traditional Medical Development Programme and code of

Table 2: Type of health-care facility used by Nigerians

Facility	National	Urban	Rural
General Hospital (per cent)	33.3	50.4	16.2
Clinic	24.6	16.3	32.9
Traditional	16.5	12.4	20.6
Dispensary	16.2	9.2	23.1
Other ⁵⁹	9.4	11.7	7.2

practice in herbal therapy.⁶⁰ An overwhelming majority of health facilities—88.1 per cent – levy a fee for medical services rendered.⁶¹

Travel time and distance to facility

Almost 78 per cent of Nigerians live within 10 km of some kind of health-care facility. A Nigerian Demographic Health Survey (NDHS)⁶² found that 68 per cent of households lived within 10 km of a health centre, and 54 per cent lived the same distance from a clinic. Less than half of the population—45 per cent – live within 10 km of a general hospital. Two-thirds of the population are within 10 km of a pharmacy. In terms of travel time, 59 per cent of households live within 30 minutes of a health centre or pharmacy, and 48 per cent are within 30 minutes of a clinic. Only 42 per cent of the population live within 30 minutes of a hospital, and 45 per cent are within 30 minutes of a private doctor. Regionally, those living in the southern part of the country live closest to a health-care facility. In the South West region, 88 per cent live within 10 km of a health facility; the corresponding figure in the South East is 87 per cent, while 82 per cent have access in the Central region, compared with 73 per cent in the North East and 67 per cent in the North West. The central region has the highest proportion of households living within 1 km of a facility.

Health status of Nigerians

There are acute deficiencies in the provision of even the most basic of health services for the general population in Nigeria. Particularly bad is the provision of maternal and child-care services, which is compounding Nigeria's poverty and contributing to its dismal performance in international statistics.

Child health

There are an estimated 60 million children living in Nigeria. Statistics show that of all the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria has made the least progress in child welfare, and its record is one of the worst among the international community.⁶³

Infant Mortality Rate, Under-5 Mortality Rate

The Under-5 Mortality Rate (U5MR) and the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) are two measures of a country's position in terms of its child-survival rates and quality of child-care provision. The U5MR measures human progress through

calculations incorporating information on nutritional status, maternal health, the availability of safe water, and sanitation. It is reputed to establish 'a more accurate picture of [the] health status of the majority of children and of society as a whole'.⁶⁴ The IMR measures the probability of a child dying before his or her fifth birthday. There are variations in the statistical data and estimation techniques used in national surveys, along with variations in recall periods and the size and complexity of surveys, a fact which contributes to the difficulty of providing accurate analysis or assessing trends. Inaccurate reporting is further compounded by cultural beliefs, and the customary reluctance to discuss sensitive data such as death of children, particularly in the case of a recent death. However, despite these constraints, statistics show that Nigeria is well behind the targets set by the World Summit for Children (WSC) and the National Programme of Action for the Survival, Protection and Development of the Nigerian Child (NPA).⁶⁵

As mentioned above, statistics vary according to literature and surveys. The IMR rate, for instance, varies from 75 to 217 deaths per 1000 live births.⁶⁶ The U5MR produces similar findings, with statistics varying between 140 to 178 per 1000 live births.⁶⁷ According to UNICEF, almost one in five children in Nigeria dies before the age of five. This rate is 30 times higher than in industrialised countries,⁶⁸ ranking Nigeria—in descending order – fifteenth out of 187 countries.⁶⁹

Main causes of mortality

The risk of death in the early years of life is linked to a prevalence in vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles, pertussis, and neonatal tetanus. The top five infant-mortality diseases in the country have been identified as follow:⁷⁰

26 per cent	malaria
24 per cent	diarrhoea
22 per cent	Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI)
22 per cent	Vaccine Preventable Diseases (VPD) e.g. measles, polio
2 per cent	malnutrition
4 per cent	other (e.g. chicken pox) ⁷¹

Other factors linked with early death in children include birth intervals, birth order, mother's age at birth, mother's level of education, and mother's health and nutrition during pregnancy. The NDHS conducted in 1999 found that the higher a mother's level of education,⁷² the lower

the level of child mortality, which indicates that mothers with no education were three times more likely to experience their child dying before the first birthday, compared with mothers who had post-secondary education. The survey concluded that children born of older mothers aged between 40 and 49 years were twice as likely to die as infants of mothers aged less than 40 years. Another contribution to child mortality is birth spacing: there are twice as many deaths among children born less than two years apart from a sibling than there are among children born three years after a preceding birth.⁷³

Immunisation

The 1999 NDHS reported a 'significant worsening of vaccination coverage'⁷⁴ over the last decade: the proportion of children aged between 12 and 23 months who were considered to be fully immunised declined from 30 per cent to 17 per cent. This includes vaccinations against tuberculosis (TB), polio, measles, and diphtheria (DPT). The level of coverage for initial vaccinations against TB and first top-up vaccinations against DPT and polio is approximately 50 per cent. Second and third injections against DPT and polio declined to just over 25 per cent coverage. Statistics reveal that 41 per cent of children in Nigeria received the measles vaccine, and 38 per cent of children received no vaccinations at all.⁷⁵ Children in urban areas were three times more likely to be fully vaccinated than their counterparts living in rural areas. For example, BCG coverage against TB in urban areas was 75 per cent, compared with 46 per cent in rural areas. The survey suggests that the disparity is attributable to ignorance of the importance of immunisation, coupled with the poor access and availability of health services in the rural areas. Statistics supplied by Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 1999 reveal even lower rates, with only 13 per cent of infants between the ages of 12 and 23 months fully immunised; 46 per cent received no immunisations at all.⁷⁶ The decline appears to be greater for DPT and polio than for TB and measles, which could be attributed to the shortage of supply of the vaccines during 1996–1998.⁷⁷

Nigeria's immunisation coverage is lower than the average for sub-Saharan Africa and other developing countries. DPT 3 and polio 3 coverage in Nigeria were half the average for sub-Saharan Africa and a third of the average for developing countries.⁷⁸ DPT 3 in Nigeria had the seventh lowest rate of coverage in the world. For measles and BCG vaccinations,

Nigeria was 17–20 per cent behind averages for sub-Saharan Africa.⁷⁹ Low coverage of polio vaccination makes Nigeria one of the few countries that have not eradicated the disease.⁸⁰

Nigeria is currently in the final stages of the global effort to eradicate polio. In 1995, 95 cases of wild polio virus were detected: this was the third largest number of polio cases recorded in the world, after Angola and India. From January to October 2000, just five cases were confirmed. However, given the low level of routine immunisation in Nigeria generally, total eradication continues to be a challenge.⁸¹ The Federal Government launched the National Immunisation Fund in 1999 to 'achieve high and substantial levels of immunisation against all vaccine preventable diseases, including attaining national self-sufficiency in vaccine production'.⁸² It is hoped to achieve 80 per cent coverage in immunisations through 'adopting measures to achieve self-sufficiency in vaccine production, including completion of phase I of the Vaccine Production Laboratory, seeking partnership with foreign firms, etc.'.⁸³ In 1999 Sub-National Immunization Days (SNIDs) were introduced, along with house-to-house campaigns, after poor coverage rates indicated that target populations were still not being reached. Statistics from the Central Bank of Nigeria report that the rate of immunisation rose from 51.9 to 72.7 per cent in 1999, an increase which was attributed to the government initiative of house-to-house immunisation.

Child nutritional status

Malnutrition in childhood can be attributed to inadequate food intake, recurrent infections, and/or inadequate maternal care.⁸⁴ Its occurrence in early childhood and during gestation can have serious repercussions in later life. Poor levels of food intake, coupled with conditions such as diarrhoea, can result in a loss of essential nutrients and can have serious consequences in terms of restricted growth and the breakdown of the body's immune system. A malnourished child or mother is also at greater risk of contracting other diseases, such as malaria and measles.⁸⁵

There are three measurements for assessing the nutritional status of children: Height for Age (stunting), Weight for Height (wasting), and Weight for Age (underweight). Once again, the varying statistical methods and insufficiency of data recording make it difficult to assess a trend or obtain a true picture from the data. According to NDHS 1999, just under half of

children under the age of three in Nigeria are stunted, and one quarter are severely stunted. This suggests chronic food insecurity and/or repeated illnesses.⁸⁶ Statistical comparisons by UNICEF suggest that stunting in children under 5 years had increased from 1990 to 1993 but decreased in 1999, with an overall decline from 43 per cent to 34 per cent. There was an increase in the prevalence of wasting from 10 per cent in 1990 to 16 per cent in 1999. The statistics for underweight children indicate a decline from 36 per cent in 1990 to 31 per cent in 1999,⁸⁷ whereas UNDP statistics reveal that 70 per cent of children under 5 years are severely and moderately underweight, while 62 per cent display wasting and stunting.

The UNICEF/FGN situation assessment indicates a noticeable lack of up-to-date information on the nature and prevalence of poverty in Nigeria, which makes an adequate interpretation of the above statistics very difficult. The assessment notes that malnourishment is more prevalent in rural than urban areas, and that geographical disparities indicate that the situation is more prevalent among children in the North East and North West of the country. Nigeria fares better in relation to stunting in comparison with the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, but is worse off in terms of wasting. In comparison with South Africa, Nigeria's indicators for both wasting and stunting are five times worse.⁸⁸ However, what each of the findings displays is the 'acute state of food insecurity' in Nigeria.⁸⁹

Maternal health

Fertility

The total fertility rate (TFR) summarises the level of fertility in terms of the number of children that a woman would have by the end of her childbearing years. The TFR for Nigeria is 5.2. Statistics vary; in the light of omissions in birth records, a truer TFR is estimated to be closer to 5.9 or 6.0, with regional and rural-urban variations.⁹⁰ For example, in the North East of Nigeria the TFR is 6.8, while in the Central and South West zones it is 4.5. Fertility rates for women are higher in rural areas, with a TFR of 5.4, compared with 4.5 in urban areas. Women with a secondary education had a lower TFR, compared with women with no education (4.91 and 6.13 respectively). Women with a higher education reported a TFR of 2.43. There are regional variances of TFR, with women in the North East reporting 6.79, and those in the South East reporting 4.64.⁹¹

The crude birth-rate measures the annual number of births in a population. Statistics for Nigeria reveal that there were 38 births per 1000 persons in the period 1994–1998. The general fertility rate, which represents the annual number of births per population among women of child-bearing age (15–44 years), was 176 per 1000 women.⁹²

Antenatal care and place of delivery

More than half of all women in Nigeria (58 per cent) report giving birth at home. There has been an increase of 5 per cent to 37 per cent in the use of health-care facilities for giving birth since 1990. Fifty-two per cent of urban women are likely to make use of a health-care facility, compared with 32 per cent in rural areas. Regional variations show that in the North East of Nigeria 85 per cent of women deliver at home, compared with 91 per cent in the North West. In the South West, 67 per cent of deliveries are conducted in a health-care facility.⁹³ Findings from the 1999 NDHS indicate that the greater the number of children the less likely a mother is to utilise a health facility for her deliveries. A skilled health worker attends 47 per cent of first births and only 35 per cent of sixth and higher births.⁹⁴ Teenage mothers are less likely to attend health facilities for delivery.

UNICEF claims that 44 per cent of women aged between 20 and 24 reported that they had given birth before they were 20 years old, 27 per cent before they were 18, and 8.5 per cent before they were 15 years old. Statistics reveal that a staggering 30 per cent of teenagers aged between 15 and 19 years were already mothers or were pregnant with their first child. The rates were higher in the North West, where 55 per cent of girls aged 15–19 years were already mothers, compared with 7.9 per cent in the South West.⁹⁵

Antenatal care varied according to region. Women in urban areas are more likely to receive antenatal care than women in rural areas, which is due to the improved availability of service provision in urban areas. Once again, results clearly indicated a general lack of assistance for women and young girls in the North:⁹⁶

- North West: 65 per cent received no care
4 per cent were helped by a birth attendant
- North East: 54 per cent no care
8 per cent birth attendant
- South West: 4 per cent no care
89 per cent trained health worker

- South East⁹⁷: 8 per cent no care
82 per cent trained health worker
- Central 20 per cent no care
76 per cent trained health worker

Level of education has a direct impact on a mother's source of antenatal care and assistance during birth. The higher the level of education, the greater the likelihood that antenatal care will be sought from a doctor during pregnancy. An estimated 67 per cent of women with post-secondary education received antenatal care from a doctor, compared with only 8 per cent who had received no education. In terms of receiving antenatal care from any service provider, 55 per cent of women with no education experienced no antenatal care, compared with 3.4 per cent of those with secondary education and 0.8 per cent of those with post-secondary education.⁹⁸ These statistics may also indicate the level of service provision in particular areas.

Tetanus toxoid vaccination

A pregnant mother should receive a tetanus toxoid vaccination to help to prevent neonatal tetanus, which is a principal cause of death among infants in developing countries. The proportion of women who had not received tetanus vaccinations averaged 39 per cent nationally, with regional variations ranging from 13 per cent in the South West to 69 per cent in the North West.⁹⁹ Tetanus infections were more common among older mothers, of whom 57.3 per cent had received no injection.¹⁰⁰ This has contributed to the high levels of maternal mortality from neonatal tetanus in Nigeria and has increased in comparison with the rest of the world.¹⁰¹ The proportions of women who had received no tetanus injection were as follows:

- North West: 69 per cent
- North East: 64 per cent
- South West: 13 per cent
- South East: 21 per cent
- Central: 28 per cent

Maternal mortality

Nigeria has one of the highest maternal mortality rates (MMR) in the world. There are reportedly 704 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.¹⁰² This means that of the approximately 2.4 million live births, about 170,000 women die of

complications during pregnancy or delivery. UNICEF claims that this contributes to the death of one woman every three minutes. The Nigerian rate is 100 times higher than the rate in industrialised countries.¹⁰³ The most common identified causes of maternal mortality are as follows:

- Haemorrhaging: 23 per cent
- Sepsis: 17 per cent (infection of the genital tract)
- Malaria: 11 per cent
- Anaemia: 11 per cent¹⁰⁴
- Abortion: 11 per cent
- Toxemia/eclampsia: 11 per cent
- CPD: 11 per cent (cephalo-pelvic disproportion)¹⁰⁵
- Others: 5 per cent

Illegally induced abortions also contribute to the mortality figures women of child-bearing age and particularly among young women. Nigeria has strict abortion laws, a fact which does not prevent large numbers of illegal and unsafe terminations, which can result in death or long-term health complications.¹⁰⁶

Births by caesarean section can contribute to saving the lives of women unable to deliver normally. Results in an NDHS survey show that only 4 per cent of births in Nigeria were conducted by caesarean section (1 in 27 births). The figures are higher in urban areas, presumably due to improved service provision and access to facilities.

Maternal nutrition

The nutritional health of children is largely determined by the health of the mother, since breast milk contains all the nutrients needed by children in the early months of their life. The 1999 NDHS reported that 97 per cent of Nigerian children were breast-fed. Information available to assess the general nutritional status of women is generally insufficient and unreliable. NDHS included information about mothers of children under the age of three in its research, calculating their body-mass index (BMI). A BMI of 18.5 was used as a cut-off figure to determine thinness, and 25.0 was considered obese. The survey found that 16.1 per cent of mothers had a BMI lower than the cut-off point. The findings varied according to region, age, and level of education. NDHS 1999 was the first survey to incorporate such statistics, and as such there are no comparable data available.¹⁰⁷

Overall social conditions in Nigeria

Food insecurity

Nigeria has in recent times seen low and at times negative growth rates in the annual production of its staple foods: yam, cassava, maize, rice, sorghum, millet, and beans. Also, there are substantial losses in harvested food crops, due to inadequate storage, processing, and marketing of its food products. It has been estimated that post-harvest food losses amount to between 20 and 25 per cent of total output. In response, Nigeria is forced to import even basic staple foods, which in 1999 amounted to 14.38 per cent of total imports. This translates into an increase in food prices to a level that is barely affordable for much of the population. Figures from the Federal Office of Statistics reveal that 40 per cent of the population of Nigeria face food insecurity.¹⁰⁸ The country's expanding urban population is set to place an even greater strain on this inadequacy.

Access to safe water

It has been estimated that 40 per cent of Nigeria's population have no access to either potable water, sanitation, or public-health services. Only 54.1 per cent of all Nigerians have access to 'safe' water;¹⁰⁹ 70.6 per cent of the population in urban areas are said to have access, compared with only 48 per cent in rural areas.¹¹⁰ The survey reports that only three States – Kaduna, Lagos and Oyo – have a supply sufficient to cover 80 per cent of the area. The vast majority of the States experienced a shortage of supply.¹¹¹

Table 3: Major sources of water supply (1999)

	Rural	Urban
Wells and boreholes	44 per cent	39 per cent
Surface water ¹¹²	38 per cent	5 per cent
Public tap	10 per cent	25 per cent
Household pipe	4 per cent	24 per cent
Tankers and vendors	2 per cent	4 per cent
Others	2 per cent	2 per cent

Access to sanitation

Nigeria has a reasonably good record on the adequacy of sanitation, compared with the rest of sub-Saharan Africa. The overall level for access to facilities in Nigeria is 52.8 per cent:¹¹³

75.3 per cent for urban populations and 44.4 per cent in rural areas. The statistics vary according to States. Some, for example, enjoy 70 per cent adequacy, as in Lagos, Edo, Delta, Anambra, Akwa, Ibom, Kanuna, Kano, and the Federal Capital Territory, while in Rivers and Niger State the corresponding figure is just 30 per cent.¹¹⁴ Although the overall prevalence of guinea worm has decreased, Nigerians with limited access to safe water and sanitation continue to suffer guinea-worm infection.

Sexual health

HIV/AIDS

Nigeria is experiencing its share of the 'pandemic'¹¹⁵ of HIV/AIDS which is plaguing much of sub-Saharan Africa. A UNICEF/FGN report described the challenge of the disease in Nigeria as threatening to 'plunge the country into a multi-faceted development crisis'.¹¹⁶ The first reported case of AIDS in Nigeria came to official attention in 1986. Five years later, in 1991, Nigeria made its first attempt under the Federal Ministry of Health to survey the situation of HIV/AIDS in the country. The results showed that HIV was prevalent among 1.8 per cent of the population. Prevalence steadily increased to 3.8 per cent in 1993 and went up to 4.5 per cent in 1998. On the evidence of 1999 statistics, 5.4 per cent of Nigerians between the ages of 15 and 49 years are living with HIV/AIDS. This means that an estimated 2.7 million adults are infected.¹¹⁷ Since there is a period of up to 10 years before the HIV virus develops fully into AIDS, the number of people who are actually sick from the virus is as yet relatively small, compared with those who are infected. Projections show that by 2009 some five million Nigerians will have developed AIDS. Surveys show that both rural and urban areas are affected. Whether inside or outside marriage, Nigerian teenagers become sexually active at an early age. This fact is inadequately catered for in the education system and has serious implications for Nigeria's growing population in terms of high fertility, maternal and infant mortality, and the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS that is sweeping the country.

Statistics indicate that 6.3 per cent of antenatal-care patients between the ages of 20 and 24 years are infected with HIV, which poses the risk of mother-to-child transmission.¹¹⁸ Due to the large numbers of females of child-bearing age infected with HIV (1.3 million) in Nigeria, coupled with the high rates of fertility, it is

suspected that large numbers of children are born infected. Estimates indicate that 200,000 children have already died from the virus.¹¹⁹

The increase in availability and popularity of commercial sex, particularly involving young girls, is a disturbing factor in the rapid spread of the disease. In Nigeria, the prevalence of HIV infection among young female commercial-sex workers is higher than in any other surveyed population. It is estimated that 80 per cent of the spread of the disease takes place through heterosexual contact. The sexual practices of male partners are the primary source of the spread of HIV infection to women. A 1996 survey estimated that 34.2 per cent of commercial-sex workers are infected with HIV.¹²⁰

Awareness of and attitudes to HIV/AIDS

In terms of HIV/AIDS awareness, 74 per cent of women and 90 per cent of men responded that they had heard about the virus.¹²¹ Levels of knowledge and attempts to prevent the virus are higher among urban dwellers than rural ones, and more prevalent in the South East and South West of the country, with lowest awareness in the North West. Awareness is heightened with increased education. Overall, men are more aware of the virus than women. Older women and married women are less aware of the virus than younger women. More than a quarter—26 per cent of women, compared with 17 per cent of men—responded that they did not know how to avoid HIV/AIDS.¹²²

Findings from NDHS show that two-thirds of respondents believed that they were not at risk of contracting the disease. When asked about behaviour change since learning of the disease, 26 per cent of women and 15 per cent of men reported that they had not changed their behaviour. Women with higher levels of education reported changes in behaviour, whereas there were few reported behavioural changes among men with education. Knowledge of methods of disease prevention is higher among young unmarried men and women, although use of condoms as a preventative measure is low, at just 15 per cent of women and 32 per cent of men. The survey shows that regular use of condoms is low and declines with age and marriage.

HIV/AIDS and the poor

Research shows that economically disadvantaged individuals are more likely to engage in high-risk behaviour, including using illegal drugs and engaging in commercial sex. Given that this group is usually also less likely to have

benefited from a full education, it is to be expected that they will be less likely to receive information on prevention or access to services, once infected. Given the high costs associated with the management of HIV/AIDS, it is improbable that the poor have access to such services. Among other considerations, HIV/AIDS places additional burdens on medical-care provision. It increases the likelihood of orphaned children, reduces the availability of labour because a greater number of incidences involve young men and women, and ultimately affects large-scale economic and developmental progression.

Given that many women marry young and are almost immediately active in reproductive functions, they are disadvantaged in their exposure to adequate information or guidance on issues related to sexual health, which has particular significance for the spread of HIV/AIDS. Another factor to consider is that in a patriarchal society like Nigeria, women are not in a position to negotiate safe sexual practices.

Current government initiatives are targeted at raising the level of awareness of the virus. Since coming into office, the new administration has established the Media Health Committee, to increase 'awareness and enlightenment', and the National Committee on HIV/AIDS, and is developing resources to integrate awareness in primary and secondary school curricula.¹²³

Sexually transmitted diseases

As well as the spread of HIV/AIDS, other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) cause concern. In a survey conducted by NDHS in 1999, just 1 per cent of women and 4 per cent of men reported having had a STD.¹²⁴ Knowledge of the transmission of STDs among men is 89 per cent, but one third of women do not know of any sexually transmitted disease. Only one third of men and women with knowledge of their infection took precautions to protect their partners. Barriers to preventing the spread of HIV or STDs include social stigma, ignorance, and cultural beliefs and attitudes. Women would normally visit traditional healers or chemists, rather than seek treatment at a clinic. Whereas awareness of HIV/AIDS is increasing, the occurrence and spread of other sexually transmitted diseases is largely unreported and ignored, because they are often unrecognised, misdiagnosed, or misunderstood.¹²⁵

Rural–urban migration

The geographic distribution of population in Nigeria is uneven and is expected to change as the migration from the rural areas to the cities and towns intensifies. The rate of urbanisation is reputed to be among the most rapid in the world. According to Shelter Rights Initiative,¹²⁶ the urban population in Nigeria rose from 20 per cent in 1970 to 38 per cent in 1993. It is forecasted to increase at an annual rate of 7 per cent and is expected to account for 70 per cent of the country's population by 2020. The South West region is reputed to be the most urbanised, with 40 per cent of the nation's 329 urban centres. Already, for example, 13 per cent (11.5 million people) of the population is concentrated in just two States, Kano and Lagos.¹²⁷ Lagos is by the far the most populated State in the country. It is projected to be the third most populous city in the world by 2015. Large-scale, uncontrolled migration to urban areas is expected to seriously hamper any anti-poverty strategies, as the numbers of uneducated, unskilled, and low-income earners swell the cities and towns, with no capacity or opportunity for themselves or their offspring to escape the cycle of poverty.¹²⁸

The magnitude of the exodus from rural areas to urban areas has had serious consequences in terms of overcrowding, increased spread of communicable diseases, poor sanitation, psychological ills, high mortality rates, environmental damage, and food insecurity. According to a study by SRI,¹²⁹ 70 per cent of residents of major Nigerian cities live in low-income settlements in various parts of the cities (and satellite towns around the cities). The World Bank indicates that half of this number has access to 'safe' water. Conditions in urban areas in Nigeria dictate living in overcrowded and sub-standard housing with little or no access to water supply, inadequate and poorly maintained sanitation, a universal deficiency of sewage-disposal facilities, irregular supply of electricity, poor and overcrowded road networks, and chaotic and sometimes fatal systems of mass transit.¹³⁰ Deficient management of the urban infrastructure, which includes poor waste management, is adding to the increased levels of pollution affecting the air, water, and land.

Urban development and housing

Information on the adequacy of housing in Nigeria is not readily available. There is insufficient accommodation in the urban areas to meet

the demand, costs are high, and overall the quality of available housing is poor. In the rural areas the greatest concern is poor-quality housing and inadequate key infrastructures.¹³¹ The majority of homes in rural areas are mud-bacha houses, which constitute 45.2 per cent of homes in Nigeria, constructed from corrugated-iron roof sheets and poorly ventilated mud walls, with few or no amenities. Few people have access to electricity, safe water, or sanitation.¹³² According to the State Governor of Lagos, 9 million of the 13 million people living in the State consider themselves to be living in slums and shanties.¹³³ Of the 60 slums identified by the World Bank, the government is attempting to transform just 15 of them.

Urban pollution

The poor management of rural–urban migration is leading to environmental degradation and pollution problems which are plaguing urban areas in Nigeria. In 1983 more than 9 million tonnes of refuse were generated – a figure which increased to 13 million in 1995.¹³⁴ Statistics show that less than 60 per cent of the waste generated in Nigerian cities is collected or disposed. This raises concerns for health and the environment. The high moisture content of the waste products poses problems of disposal. Refuse such as plastic (a major waste constituent in Nigeria since the mid-1980s) cannot be incinerated and leaves an acrid smell when burnt, thus contributing to the pollution of the air and a preponderance of unsightly waste besmirching the landscape. There are few sanitary landfills in the country, and open dumping is the common method of waste disposal, which encourages the spread of disease, injury, fire, and pollution.

Extensive environmental damage is another by-product of poverty. The increase in migration to find employment in coastal areas in the South places a strain on the natural-resource base. The over-dependency on wood for fuel in rural areas is a cause for concern, as is the cultivation of fragile land for survival. The findings from participatory research in the 1994 *World Development Report* show that individuals have observed a change in the environment in terms of poor soil quality, the scarcity of forests and farmland, and a heavy reliance on cultivating just one crop.¹³⁵

Nigeria has 72 million hectares of agricultural land, of which only one third is productive. The majority is farmed in smallholdings of less than 5 hectares and with low yields. These farmers

are constrained by poor infrastructure, which makes marketing difficult, and they are compensated with inadequate prices for their efforts. An estimated 87.7 per cent of rural dwellers live in extreme poverty. Hence, more and more people are being pushed out of the rural areas and pulled into the urban cities and towns in search of a better life. The migrants from rural to urban areas are predominantly the most economically active, which leaves women and children to farm the land and make a living.

Education in Nigeria

The level of education of a country's population is used as an indicator of its socio-economic development. It is assumed that other matters such as health, hygiene, and reproductive health and behaviour are affected by education.¹³⁶ It is clearly set out in the Nigerian Constitution that each Nigerian has the right to an education. Various governments have expressed interest in extending universal primary education and three years of secondary schooling to all citizens. National goals were set out in the National Programme for Action on the Survival, Protection and Development of the Nigerian Child (NPA) in 1992, which aimed to reduce illiteracy among females by half.¹³⁷ The current administration has publicised its commitment to education during its tenure and beyond. Recognising that illiteracy is high, school enrolment is low, and school drop-out is increasing, the government committed itself to achieving 'Education for all by the year 2000', to the 'total eradication of illiteracy by 2010', and 100 per cent school enrolment by the same target year, and to increasing adult literacy to 70 per cent by 2003.¹³⁸ The government seeks to achieve this through 'creating an enabling environment for teaching/learning comparable to those in the most progressively industrialising countries', and encouraging private-sector participation, curricula improvements, and judicial enforcement.¹³⁹

Yet despite attempts to reduce Nigeria's appalling illiteracy statistics, the education system continues to be hampered by problems such as lack of essential and adequate manpower; incessant strikes by teachers and staff who have not been paid; inability of supervising agencies to set and/or enforce standards; poor and uninviting environments; overcrowding; poor provision of materials and resources; poor curricula; and an absence of infrastructural facilities.

In 2000 the Central Bank of Nigeria reported an increase in the pupil/teacher ratio from 52 to 54 pupils per teacher in primary schools and 38 to 41 in secondary schools. Funding for the educational sector rose by 10.1 per cent to N56,568.1 million but accounted for just 8.7 per cent of the Federal Government budgetary allocation. This allocation was lower than the 25 per cent stipulated by the United Nations Educational Scientific Organisation (UNESCO).¹⁴⁰

Literacy

In 1999 the government established the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme, which made it compulsory for every child to be educated free of charge up to junior secondary level, in order to meet the nation's need for development. Statistics show, however, that overall literacy in Nigeria is still only 57 per cent,¹⁴¹ despite these initiatives.¹⁴² A gender analysis reveals that the figures are worse for women, among whom there has been a decline of 4 per cent to 41 per cent. The most recent NDHS reveals that men in Nigeria receive three years' more education than women do, with a median of 4.7 years, compared with just 1.7 for females.¹⁴³

Geographical disparities indicate that illiteracy is higher in rural areas and in northern parts of the country. Sixty-seven per cent of adults in urban areas are literate, compared with 42 per cent who live in rural areas. The Literacy Gender Disparity Index (LGPI) measures Nigeria's gender equity in literacy at 0.8, where 1 indicates equality of literacy among men and women. However, when adjusted to rural/urban analysis, the index becomes 0.66 among women in rural areas, compared with 0.78 in urban areas.¹⁴⁴ In North West and North East Nigeria, statistics revealed that literacy rates were 21–22 per cent for females and 40–42 per cent for males. In the South West and South East, the statistics revealed that female literacy rates were 55 per cent and 60 per cent respectively.¹⁴⁵

It should be noted that there is controversy over the quantification of literacy levels in Nigeria, since researchers have not specified whether or not literacy is restricted to English or whether or not it incorporates literacy in Arabic.¹⁴⁶

Primary and secondary school enrolment

Although the number of primary and secondary schools in Nigeria has increased by 2.0 per cent, school enrolment continues to be low. According to the Federal Office of Statistics/UNICEF,

gross school enrolment for primary-school children in Nigeria (6–11 years) is 80.7 per cent. Of this figure, 84 per cent are boys and 7.3 per cent are girls.¹⁴⁷ Net primary figures suggest that 52.9 per cent are enrolled, and 57.2 per cent of boys, with a net national primary-school enrolment of 55.1 per cent. However, these figures vary according to region: for example, in Abia, primary-school enrolment is 96.2 per cent, whereas the figure in Jigawa is just 17.1 per cent. Enrolment for secondary education (12–17 years) is 72.9 per cent: 74 per cent for boys and 71.7 per cent for girls. In Abia, secondary enrolment rates are 97.3 per cent, while at the opposite end of the scale, enrolment at secondary schools in Katsina was just 20.9 per cent.¹⁴⁸ However, the most recent Central Bank of Nigeria statistics show a very different picture. Statistics quoted from Federal Ministries of Education show that the proportion of girls enrolled in primary schools actually increased by 0.5 per cent to 49 per cent, and secondary enrolments increased to 46 per cent from 45.0 per cent in the previous year.

However, school-enrolment rates do not provide an indication of actual school attendance. Children may well enrol in their local school, yet may not be able to afford to attend daily classes. UNDP figures¹⁴⁹ show that the incidence of school drop-out is between 15 and 20 per cent. Net primary-school attendance was 55.1 per cent of all children, of whom 57.2 per cent were males and 52.9 per cent were females. Results from studies in Iseyin and Oyo State show that children stay in school and attend regularly if they are able to find some form of supplementary income to support themselves. This in turn affects educational performance. Due to the increasing economic pressures on families, the survey showed that in States in the South East (Abia, Enugu, Imo, and Anambra) families withdrew their male children from school in favour of employment. In the Northern States, girls were taken from school when pregnant to assist in income generation for the household, or were given away in marriage. In some areas of the country, because of the lack of employment opportunities after education, many parents are withdrawing their children from schools in favour of vocational training, to work, or to go begging.

Third-level education

While the numbers of primary and secondary schools increase, the number of tertiary colleges

remain unchanged at 144. Third-level graduates have twice the earning potential of secondary-school leavers, a fact which has led to an overwhelming increase in the number of students aspiring to graduate from third-level colleges, thus producing a surplus of unemployed graduates in the country. According to a UNDP report, 'Nigerian universities are producing relatively too many graduates of dubious quality and relevance'.¹⁵⁰ A CBN publication revealed that one in 10 applicants to the Labour Exchanges was a university graduate. Students are obliged to endure a learning environment which lacks sufficient and adequate up-to-date equipment and resources. There is a shortage of graduates entering and leaving universities with technological and scientific knowledge. Current applications for courses in natural sciences and applied sciences constitute 35–40 per cent of enrolments. For Nigeria to compete globally in terms of labour supply, this figure would need to increase to 60–66 per cent. However, the national enrolment into Nigerian colleges and universities is less than 5 per cent, and many graduates migrate to other countries in search of employment.

The cost of 'free' education

Poverty hinders the enjoyment of a citizen's constitutional right to an education. Although primary education in Nigeria is free in theory, in practice this is rarely the case. Federal and State governments are unsuitably resourced to implement this right, which results in schools being increasingly cornered into charging levies for building maintenance, parent-teacher associations, examinations, etc. Research conducted in Lagos State showed that costs to families in urban areas for primary education averaged N16,500; the figure for rural public schools was N9250. The average cost per child in a household for public secondary education was N25,000.¹⁵¹ Costs of attendance at private schools were much higher. Relatively few parents in Nigeria can afford the fees to enrol their children in school and support them to attend regularly. Inability to afford school fees was cited by 29 per cent of children as a reason for leaving school.¹⁵² Children are taken out of school to supplement household income; others may work to pay for their own education, which affects their performance; often children go without food in order to pay for fees, thus harming their physical and mental development. Others are removed from school due to the lack of

employment prospects. With increasing unemployment, school is seen as a waste of time and resources. Employment is favoured over education, which is popularly viewed as bestowing honour, respect, and wealth. In the South East this viewpoint is hampering school attendance in favour of apprenticeship and small business.

Unemployment

Statistics for unemployment figures are unreliable and unrepresentative. The Federal Office of Statistics claims that as at March 2000 the national unemployment figure was 3.6 per cent. This figure was up 0.6 per cent from the previous year. However, the Central Bank cautions that low unemployment figures should be 'interpreted with caution, because of the very high incidence of underemployment in the economy'.¹⁵³ Statistics exclude the unemployed population who have not registered with the Labour Exchanges; they therefore do not reflect the underemployment of the informal labour market.

Conclusion

A recent UNDP report observed that 'It is not an exaggeration to claim that an unrepresentative political system or lack of democracy is at the root of poverty in Nigeria.'¹⁵⁴ Nigeria's poverty has been linked to mismanagement of its macro-economic policy, and to inadequate funding, poor-quality infrastructural facilities, neglect of social-service provision to the population, and poor management, leading to increasing corruption. Despite successive governments' poverty-alleviating strategies, such as the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) in 1986, the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) in 1997, the Better Life Programme 1987, and Family Support Programme in 1994, poverty continues to prevail in Nigeria. The scenario presented in this chapter shows that poverty continues to plague the people of Nigeria, despite the installation of democracy. 'The failure to ensure effective implementation of these programmes may be seen as the precursor to most of the current perpetuation of poverty in Nigeria.'¹⁵⁵

The catalogue of problems confronting Nigerians is intensifying their despondency,

deepening their poverty, and forcing them to rely on alternative survival strategies. The state of the nation's under-funded social sector is deplorable. As the population continues to increase, rural-urban migration explodes, and poverty and inequality flourish. The continued neglect of the social sector translates into distressing health-status statistics, particularly in the case of women and children, who are among the most vulnerable. Although the new democratic leadership is committed to affording a 'high priority ... [to] the health status of Nigerians',¹⁵⁶ clearly much more needs to be done, as targets are not being met.

Education is seen by many as the route to poverty alleviation: 'There is no doubt that meaningful education is the most potent instrument for alleviating and eventually abolishing poverty.'¹⁵⁷ Nigeria's education system is in a shambles, with high pupil-to-teacher ratios and poorly equipped classrooms. The lack of education reflected in the Nigeria's poor performance in literacy and school-enrolment indicators is seen by many observers as a primary obstacle in the development of the poor. Nigerians are generally ignorant of their human, civil, and legal rights. The present administration has made efforts to address the issue of school enrolment through the launch of the Universal Basic Education scheme (UBE) and has emphasised the management and effective control of anti-social and often violent cults in tertiary institutions. However, there is a long way to go to achieve the target of eradicating illiteracy and attaining 100 per cent school enrolment by the year 2010.¹⁵⁸

If the pursuit of poverty alleviation and reduction is the 'first priority of the Obasanjo Administration', and the Administration is committed to 'improving their [Nigerians'] quality of life',¹⁵⁹ then government expenditure on social services needs to reflect this commitment.

4 Poverty and the political system in Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria's political history since independence has been characterised by a long period of coups, resulting in a protracted period of military dictatorship. The era of military rule saw the complete abuse of the rule of law, over-concentration of power at the centre, and general dissatisfaction among the people. Civil society's clamour for a democratic system of government,¹⁶⁰ combined with the diplomatic isolation of the country, added to the momentum which set in motion the process for democratic elections. At last the new Constitution was adopted in May 1999, and thus ended the military era.

The adoption of the new Constitution raised hopes and expectations across all sectors of society. People were eager to see a rapid transformation of the economy and improved quality in the provision of social services. These high expectations, coupled with violent conflict among religious and ethnic factions in some parts of the country, posed a great challenge to the fragile democracy. The situation has been normalised to some extent, but the greatest challenge facing Nigeria is how to sustain the present democratic dispensation and to use it to transform the economy, with the aim of meeting the needs of the poor and decentralising power such that it allows for popular participation in the democratic system.

Against this background, we now attempt a review of Nigeria's political history, linking it to the present political structures and the obligations of government, as outlined in the 1999 Constitution. We argue that an arena for popular participation and the practice of good governance has been created, but obstacles remain to be overcome. The challenges faced by the present republic must be managed properly if Nigeria's nascent democracy is to be sustained, and the living conditions of the people are to be improved.

Political history

Nigeria achieved independence from Britain in 1960, but thereafter was subject to military rule

for almost thirty years. The period between independence and the current democratic dispensation, which came into force under the 1999 Constitution, was characterised by changes in the structure of the political landscape which led to some significant democratic deficits. Nigeria has experienced six violent changes of government, the greatest number in the entire modern history of Africa.¹⁶¹ Many observers argue that the lack of democracy and popular participation is one reason for the prevalence of poverty in Africa.

The military era in Nigeria was characterised by abuse of power and the political apparatus, and denial of the rights of the people. This was also the period when corruption became so pervasive that people lost confidence in the system of governance.¹⁶² Further analysis shows that the economic downturn in Nigeria is to a large extent the result of the long years of military rule. It has been argued that 'poverty usually flourishes in societies deprived of human freedom. Such societies are engulfed in a series of vicious circles of poverty. There is no further obstacle to development than the lack of basic human freedom.'¹⁶³ This description aptly fits the Nigerian scenario during the years of military rule.

In order to appreciate the challenges that lie ahead of the present government, it is important to understand the effects of military rule. As this paper argues throughout, decay in the political, economic, and social system of Nigeria over the years has resulted in high levels of poverty.¹⁶⁴ The review below takes into consideration the political and administrative structures of the country and the roles expected of each in the formulation of policies which will help to address the pervasiveness of poverty.

The present political system

In May 1999, a democratically elected government was sworn into power under the 1999 Constitution, thus ending the long period of military rule and ushering in a new era which

guaranteed the people of Nigeria their fundamental human rights and other basic rights. To ensure that governance is taken to the doorsteps of the people, the Constitution outlines a three-tier structure, consisting of Federal, States, and Local governments.

The current structure

The structure at the Federal level consists of the President and the Ministers, who constitute the Executive, and the two chambers of the National Assembly, which form the legislature and the Judiciary. At the State level, the structure takes a similar form, whereby the Governor and the Commissioners serve as the Executive Council; but the Legislature is a single chamber. The judiciary is also visible at both Federal and State levels. The third tier is the Local Government Council (to which has been added a legislature).¹⁶⁵

The Constitution outlines the roles and responsibilities of each level, in particular the Federal and State levels. Part 1 of the Second Schedule of the Constitution defines the Exclusive List of matters on which only the National Assembly can legislate. Some of the items listed in this schedule include defence, citizenship, banking, police, political parties, and taxation. Part 2 of the same schedule under the Concurrent List outlines matters such as education, electricity, and division of federal revenue, which are the responsibility of both the National and State Assemblies. The responsibilities assigned to Local Government are outlined under the Fourth Schedule; they cover education, agriculture, and health care. The Constitution further defines in detail the operations of the Federal and State agencies, but it is silent on Local Government responsibility. The State agencies have been assigned the responsibility of managing Local Government. This implies that the State Assemblies have to pass laws which define the operations of Local Government in their respective States.¹⁶⁶

The Constitution makes provisions for the preservation and protection of the unity of the country. The constitution stipulates that no Governor of a State, or his or her Deputy, Commissioner, or Officer in the public service of a State shall exercise the powers conferred on him/her in such a way as to impede, prejudice or endanger the continuance of a united Federal Government in Nigeria, or to endanger any asset or investment of the Federal Government in the State. It further states that the Governors are subordinated to the Federal Executive, that is, the President.¹⁶⁷

Fundamental obligations of government

These are set out under Sections 13 and 14 of the Constitution. The fundamental obligations of all three tiers of Government are as follows:

- To observe the principles of democracy and social justice.
- To ensure that the systems of administration in these tiers of government are democratic and based on the principles of what is fair and just to the people.
- To recognise that power belongs to the people, and that the Constitution is supreme.
- To use this power to promote the security and welfare of the people.
- To ensure that the people participate in their government through a democratic process, as laid down by the Constitution; for example, by ensuring the existence of grassroots or community-level politics via local governments.

Other obligations identified include political, economic, social, and educational objectives, which are outlined below.

Political objectives

The Government shall ensure:

- That there is no discrimination of any kind.
- That adequate facilities are provided.
- That every citizen is free to live in any part of Nigeria without fear.
- That marriage is encouraged between people from different ethnic groups, religions, and backgrounds.
- That every Nigerian is loyal to the nation.
- That every Nigerian feels that he [sic] belongs to and is involved in government.
- That corruption and abuse of power is brought to an end.

Economic objectives

The Government shall ensure:

- That the national wealth is used for the happiness, freedom, and welfare of every citizen by giving everybody equal opportunity to enjoy the wealth of the nation.
- That everybody is given the opportunity to engage in any economic activity they choose

to be involved in; the economic activity, however, must not be unlawful or illegal.

- That wealth is not concentrated in a few hands.
- That there is suitable and adequate shelter, and that a reasonable minimum living wage, old-age care, pensions, unemployment benefits, and sick benefits are paid to all citizens.

Social objectives

The Government shall ensure the following:

- The equality of rights and opportunities.
- The sanctity and dignity of the human person.
- The health, safety, and welfare of all persons in employment .
- Protection of children, young persons, and the aged against exploitation, deprivation, and neglect.
- That actions of Government shall not be cruel or inhuman.
- That the natural resources of the nation shall be used for all.

Educational objectives

The Government shall direct its policies towards:

- Providing adequate education and equal opportunity at all levels.
- Eradicating illiteracy by providing, when it is practicable, free, compulsory primary education, free secondary education, free university education, and free adult education.

These structures and clearly defined roles and responsibilities are critical in promoting popular participation, not only in the democratic process but also in the conduct of the business of government. They seek to promote transparency and accountability, in the recognition that the people have the right to know what is happening. The objectives outlined in the Constitution empower the Federal Government to design pro-poor policies and to ensure their implementation. To ensure effective implementation of these objectives, the Constitution further provides for the creation of an agency to play a monitoring role. Basically, the Constitution has empowered government; the use of this power can be assessed through the economic, social, and other policies and strategies of the government.

The judiciary and access to justice

Role of the judiciary

The 1999 Constitution recognises the role of the judiciary in the promotion of the rule of law and in upholding the fundamental rights of the people.¹⁶⁸ Specifically, the judiciary is expected to do the following:

- Interpret and determine the meaning of the laws of the country.
- Settle disputes among citizens and also between citizens and the State.
- Serve as the means for the projection and enforcement of the fundamental rights of the citizens and communities.
- Decide the results of elections, if they are challenged by the electoral candidates or other relevant groups.

A key element of the roles assigned to the judiciary is that it is responsible for defending the supremacy of the Constitution. In this regard, the Supreme Court has power to declare invalid any law found to be inconsistent with the Constitution.¹⁶⁹

Structure of the judiciary

The judicial powers of the Federation are vested in the courts.¹⁷⁰ The various courts, in order of superiority and authority, are:

- The Supreme Court
- The Federal Court of Appeal
- The Federal High Court
- A High Court of State
- A Magistrate's Court
- A Sharia Court of Appeal
- A Customary Court of Appeal of a State
- Other courts which may be authorised by law through the National Assembly.

The power of jurisdiction determines the kinds of dispute or case that each of these courts is entitled to hear or determine.

The level to which the judiciary can perform the roles expected of it under the Constitution depends on a number of factors. To understand them, it is necessary to understand the structure of the judicial system and then analyse the issues

that make it difficult for the system to function under a democratic dispensation. The judicial system in Nigeria consists of three types of court, corresponding to three legal systems: customary courts, the Sharia courts, and those dispensing modern law. This type of structure, it has been observed, creates its own contradictions and therefore determines the level of accessibility to justice, particularly of the poor and marginalised.¹⁷¹

Access to justice¹⁷²

It has been argued that the military governments of the past undermined the authority and effectiveness of the judicial system. This fact has led the public to distrust judicial institutions. The judicial system at all levels has been characterised by the denial of justice, particularly to the poor; an inability to defend the rights of the people, particularly those relating to health care and education; the inability of the law-enforcement agencies, including the judicial system, to guarantee the safety and security of the people; and high levels of corruption.

The result is lack of access to justice. In spite of the reforms of the new democratic era, the judicial system has not been overhauled thoroughly enough to defend the rights of the citizens as enshrined in the Constitution. There is therefore a demand for change, and efforts are being made to transform the judicial system.

As argued in *Justice Vision 2001: Three Year Strategy for the Transformation of Administration of Justice System in Nigeria*, '... the administration of justice system in the country is in need of change; not change for the sake of it but because people want a more effective and open system of justice which is in the reach of the ordinary person'.¹⁷³ These remarks reveal the state of the judicial system and emphasise the fact that access to justice by the populace is a critical condition, not just for sustaining the democratic system of government, but for improving the quality of life.¹⁷⁴

The Constitution and existing laws

Certain legal instruments and laws, including various portions of the Constitution, require revision because they continue to deny the citizenry, collectively or individually, their basic rights.¹⁷⁵ For example, although the Constitution guarantees the right of the people to health care

and education, these rights are non-justiciable, because they fall under the Fundamental Objectives and Direct Principles of State Policy.¹⁷⁶ The Land Use Act has been identified as one of the laws that need to be reviewed. Although in theory individuals could seek redress by using international conventions ratified by Nigeria, this is not possible in practice, because 'most of these conventions have not been domesticated'¹⁷⁷ and therefore cannot be argued in a law court.

Democracy and conflict

It is on record that Nigeria has experienced more internal armed conflicts during the present democratic system since the civil war than during any other period in the political history of the country.¹⁷⁸ Violence motivated by ethnic and religious differences has been experienced in various parts of Nigeria; for example in response to the imposition of Islamic laws in some areas, which has led to the emergence of militant groups. Another recorded source of conflict is the tension which often exists between the executive and legislative arms of government and in some cases between Governors and their deputies. These conflict-prone and potentially violent situations threaten to disrupt the fragile democratic process.

It has generally been supposed that the recent and current spates of violence and conflicts are an expression of individual freedoms which were denied during the years of military rule. Others have suggested that the high unemployment rate has made it possible for the youth to be mobilised into militant groups. Unemployment and the denial of freedoms are both measures of poverty.¹⁷⁹

Causes of conflict

In analysing the causes of conflicts and violence, observers argue for a range of causes:

- Abject poverty.
- Youth unemployment.
- Manipulation of the impoverished people by the elite.
- Uneven distribution of amenities, resources, and appointments.
- Corruption, injustice, and oppression.
- Unpatriotic and corrupt communal leaders.
- Low capacity of law-enforcement agencies.

- Insensitivity on the part of multinational companies to the needs of the people and communities whose resources they are appropriating and whose ecology is being destroyed.

Uneven distribution of economic and social benefits

It has been argued that geographical inequalities in the distribution of resources and social services create tension and social unrest. It is therefore important to consider the disparities between geographical areas. Existing data concerning the level of spatial inequality in the distribution of resources indicate that 'Nigeria's poor states are concentrated in the North West, North East and North Central zones. Most northern states are rural.'¹⁸⁰ The essence of this exposition is to highlight the fact that in working towards achieving their political, social, economic, educational objectives as a nation, Nigerians must take into consideration the differing needs of the various States.¹⁸¹ Failure to do so would sow seeds of conflict which could grow to undermine the democratic system.

The debt burden and political sovereignty

Related to this is a recognition of the fact that Nigeria's burden of debt is a political and not a technical issue. The debt burden, including both external and internal debts, is estimated to constitute around 40 per cent of the country's GDP. This is a political issue, because 'it diminishes the sovereignty of the country and confers power on the creditors (both external and internal creditors)'.¹⁸² In view of this, it has been proposed that in order not to undermine the nation's fragile democracy, there is a need to initiate a prompt process of action which is all-inclusive and will propel the nation towards self-reliance.

Challenges to the current political dispensation

It has been observed that there cannot be any meaningful development in a State where good governance is absent. Again, there can never be good governance where there is no democracy. The truth is that no genuine investment could thrive in a society that has no respect for the rule

of law, lacks respect for individual human rights, and above all has an unstable polity.¹⁸³

A review of the present democratic system has revealed that the change in the polity of Nigeria has not been reflected in the living conditions of the people. The *Human Development Report 2001* comments: 'unfortunately, two years on, the economic situation has deteriorated rather than improved. This lack of movement forward is due primarily to the fact that certain essential prerequisites are still lacking.'¹⁸⁴ A Nigerian observer has argued that 'we need laws and policies that will facilitate access to adequate facilities, adequate employment and enough food, qualitative education and adequate shelter for all Nigerians. These are issues that policy makers should give top priority in order to have a successful democratic process in Nigeria.'¹⁸⁵ These comments point to the fact that there are some grave challenges facing the political system.

Promoting good governance

As observed above, Nigeria's political history has been shaped by a series of coups, which not only destabilised the political structure but also brought in its wake disconnected policies and frequent changes in government priorities. The literature reviewed strongly suggests that this situation, compounded by widespread corruption and mismanagement, has helped to perpetuate poverty. The new political dispensation faces the challenge of promoting good governance, in order to rebuild people's confidence in the democratic process.¹⁸⁶

Managing the mix of interests

Another dimension is that the current political system has raised high expectations among the electorate, who now have an opportunity to exercise their civic responsibilities and to enjoy a human-rights regime which should guarantee them their basic human needs. For the people, it is obvious that the attainment of democratic goals is directly related to the ability to ensure economic growth and development. The challenge, therefore, is how to manage the mix of the newly acquired civic liberties, while balancing the need for resource control on one hand and the eradication of poverty through coherent economic, political, and social strategies on the other.

Addressing the needs of the people

The economy inherited by the present government is structurally weak. It will take time to

re-structure the system and put the nation on the path towards growth and development. The ability to address the social and infrastructural needs of the people depends on the degree to which pro-poor policies are formulated. It also depends on how the government is prepared to promote popular participation, particularly at the local and grassroots levels, without fear of losing control.

Strengthening capacity

Attainment of the above requires a protracted and adequately funded process of capacity building, at all levels of government, but with greatest attention paid to the lower levels. 'The success of this Republic depends to a large extent on how adequately informed the leaders and the led are on the ideas, institutions, practices and principles that are essential to the success of a democratic society.'¹⁸⁷

Equitable distribution of resources

In an endeavour to demonstrate preparedness to promote social justice and accountable leadership, various institutions have been set up to help to propel the process. Notable among these are the Anti-Corruption Commission, the Human Rights Commission, the Human Rights Violation Commission, and the Niger Delta Development Commission. The establishment of these notwithstanding, the Government still faces the challenge of promoting equity in the distribution of national resources, reducing poverty, and increasing accessibility to basic services, particularly in the most deprived parts of the country.

Local Government independence and capacity

Another challenge for the political system is to develop the ability of Local Government Councils to plan and implement interventions which will propel the move towards poverty eradication.¹⁸⁸ Not only are the roles of Local Government not made explicit in the Constitution, but it is evident that the local government system lacks autonomy. There are several reasons for this. Local government is structurally and legally controlled, at both the Federal and State levels, and therefore cannot function as expected. Federal institutions have been imposed on local government. The roles of local government in education and health care are limited to primary education and primary health care respectively. Local

government plans, budgets, and cash flows must be approved at the State level, with the implication that although a project may be a priority, the State Government may think otherwise and not approve it. Funds for the implementation of pro-poor policies and programmes are inadequate. Finally, Local Government Councils lack planning systems, have limited numbers of qualified staff, and lack the capacity to design long-term programmes.

Sustaining the democratic system

It has been argued that democracy promotes development and enhances the process of inclusion.¹⁸⁹ For these reasons, there seems to be a general consensus that the present democratic process has to be sustained if the poverty level of the people is to be reduced. In line with this school of thought, the following have been proposed as ways of sustaining the new system:

- Transformation of the present democracy into a people's democracy, by encouraging popular participation in public life, and a partnership between government and civil society.
- Internalisation into the machinery of governance of political and ethical values of justice, human rights, people's sovereignty, empowerment, and accountability.
- Formulation of policies which properly target and motivate the people, in order to create a spirit of national cohesion.
- Promotion of humane governance systems which accommodate people's needs, irrespective of gender and social status.
- Improved co-ordination between all tiers of government, and channelling of adequate resources to the agricultural and social sectors by all tiers of government.
- Building on the common cultural traits of a multicultural and diverse society in the interests of the whole country.
- Developing a common vision which is shared and upheld by all.

Conclusion

The sustenance of the democratic process, it has been argued, is related to the use of democracy as a tool for providing peace, stability, and development. It also involves basing political

authority on the principles of justice, equity, and fair play, since these are the civic virtues that bond people together. In addition, it involves creating space for divergent views, because democracy is an all-inclusive process and therefore policy formulation is not the sole prerogative of the party in power. Sustenance of democracy is directly related to improving the lives of the people in social, economic, and environmental terms.

This chapter has reviewed the political structures of Nigeria in relationship to the ideals enshrined in the Constitution; it has also articulated some of the challenges facing the new democratic system. These challenges require that the nation's leadership and all stakeholders should act locally to prepare the country's political economy for the betterment of the people. This entails maintaining the supremacy of the rule of law, basic ethical values of justice and equity, human rights, empowerment, transparency, and accountability.¹⁹⁰

5 Poverty and the economy in Nigeria

Introduction

It has been observed that the economy of Nigeria was built with a view to making the country one of the world's economic giants. The necessary infrastructure had been put in place, with industry and agriculture being the mainstays of the economy. In the 1970s the oil industry became a dominant sector and the major source of foreign exchange, but instead of pushing the economy forward, it was ultimately responsible for its downturn. The high revenues from oil exports shifted attention away from the other sectors, resulting in their virtual collapse. Nigeria declined into its current position as one of the poorest countries in the world. It has been described as 'a rich country with a poor population – the poorest and most deprived in OPEC'.¹⁹¹

This chapter attempts to assess the economic policies of Nigeria, as part of the process of understanding the causes of poverty. It reviews the policy directions of various governments in order to determine their thrust. There is a review of key sectors of the economy – agriculture, industry, and minerals – and a survey of official efforts to reduce poverty, with an assessment of their effectiveness. The chapter ends by proposing an effective way forward.

The structure of the economy

An examination of the structure of the Nigerian economy is essential for gaining an understanding of the pervasiveness of poverty in the country. At the time of independence the basis of the national economy was mainly agrarian. The government then took a policy decision to promote industrial production, which was made possible by the oil boom of the 1970s. The industrialisation process resulted in a shift in focus away from the agricultural sector. The focus later shifted to oil, which became a major source of revenue. The economy became dangerously dependent on the oil sector, which accounted for more than 98 per cent of export earnings in

1998 (up from 58.3 per cent in 1970).¹⁹² The situation has persisted until the present, which explains why the economy has been described as having a narrow, disarticulated, monocultural production base, characterised by a degraded environment and the predominance of subsistence and commercial activities.¹⁹³

Agriculture

Agriculture was the backbone of the Nigerian economy at the time of independence. It continues to be the main source of employment in the economy (accounting for about 70 per cent of the active labour force).¹⁹⁴ However, due to over-dependence on oil, its contribution to national revenue declined from 80 per cent in 1960 to 1.5 per cent in 1995. Because it is the people's main source of livelihood, its contribution to GDP, although lower than at independence, was nevertheless estimated to be in the range of 39 per cent in 1996 and 40.4 per cent in 1999. Agriculture therefore remains the major contributor to GDP.¹⁹⁵ In spite of this, Nigeria experiences perennial food deficits and has become a major importer of food.¹⁹⁶ Various governments initiated reforms to try to arrest the decline, with measures such as increased allocation of capital, input supply, and support for marketing.

The major reasons identified as responsible for the decline in the level of production of agricultural products are the following.

- Deterioration in rural infrastructure.
- Lack of working capital.
- Low rate of adoption of appropriate technology.
- Poor post-harvest technology.
- Environmental degradation.
- Premature liberalisation and deregulation.
- Lack of proactive pro-farmer food pricing.
- High cost of farm inputs.
- Poor distribution of fertiliser.
- High population growth (at a rate of 2.8 per cent per annum).

In addition, the disproportionate distribution of social services, coupled with low agricultural output and low incomes, has resulted in a high rate of out-migration from the rural areas to urban centres.¹⁹⁷ For young people, agriculture is no longer a sustainable means of earning a living, and they therefore migrate to urban areas in search of jobs and other forms of livelihood.

The ultimate effect of the drop in agricultural production has been lower incomes for a majority of the people who depend on the sector for their livelihood. The decline in income has made it impossible for them to pay for medical services and education for their children. The high level of psychological deprivation in the country is one result of this.¹⁹⁸

Industry

At independence, one of the major tasks of the government was to transform the industrial base of the economy, in order to diversify away from the traditional agrarian economy.¹⁹⁹ Nigeria's industrialisation programme was implemented in phases and had a high level of direct government participation. The increased revenue from oil helped to accelerate the rate of industrial development, but the fall in the global price of oil in the mid-1980s created a shortage of the foreign exchange needed to procure raw materials and spares.²⁰⁰ The effect was a decline in capacity utilisation.

During the period of Structural Adjustment, the government's policy was to boost private participation in direct productive activities, while reducing the level of its own involvement. The effect was an increase in manufacturing output to an average of 8.1 per cent between 1987 and 1992. However, this momentum could not be sustained.²⁰¹ Between 1992 and the present, the industrial sector has performed dismally. The sector's contribution as a whole declined from 43.2 per cent in 1989 to 33.3 per cent in 1998. The manufacturing sub-sector contributed only 5.4 per cent of GDP in 1998.

The following reasons account for the fall in the performance of the industrial sector:

- Low capacity utilisation.
- A collapse in the world market price of oil, creating shortages of the foreign currency required for importing raw materials and capital goods.
- Obsolete equipment and machinery.
- Inadequate infrastructure.

- Implementation of inappropriate economic policies, such as high interest-rate regimes and inflationary financing.
- Liberalisation and deregulation of the economy.

The present administration plans to revamp the industrial sector and attract direct foreign investment.²⁰² Steps have been taken to prepare an Industrial Blueprint, in addition to initiating action to revitalise ailing State-owned enterprises with a view to privatising some of them. Prominent among those to be privatised are the Ajaokuta Steel Industry and four other steel concerns. The government aims to increase the sector's contribution to GDP, create more employment opportunities, and increase capacity utilisation.

Minerals

Nigeria is rich in minerals such as coal, tin, gypsum, barites, kaolin, bitumen, tack, gold, iron ore, and lignite. In spite of the economic potential of the solid-minerals sector, appropriate policies were not initiated to ensure their exploitation. Other reasons for the failure to exploit the country's mineral resources include inadequate private funding, lack of an enabling environment for foreign investment, and a dearth of trained manpower and technological expertise.²⁰³

Economic performance in figures

Table 4 shows that Nigeria's GDP grew in real terms by 3.8 per cent in 2000. It also indicates the performance of the various sectors. However, an Economist Intelligence Unit report (2001) identified some contradictions between the figures and the text of the CBN's Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for 2000, from which the data were taken. For instance, while the text in the Bank's report states that the service sector drove growth in the economy, the figures indicate otherwise. Again, the text states that agriculture grew at 2.6 per cent and industry at 0.7 per cent. But the data show that agriculture grew strongly (by 5.2 per cent), followed by construction services, with industry recording 1.8 per cent.

On the expenditure side, the growth in the economy has been driven by private consumption, investment, and exports. On the contrary, the figures reveal that although government capital expenditure (investment) contracted, recurrent expenditure increased. These inconsistencies make a critical analysis difficult, but

Table 4 shows some level of improvement. However, it is not possible to draw definite conclusions with regard to poverty reduction.

	1999	2000	% change
By sector			
Agriculture	47.59	50.08	5.20
Industry	19.77	20.13	1.80
Building and construction	2.46	2.55	3.70
Wholesale and retail trade	13.62	13.86	2.50
Services	32.69	33.87	3.60
GDP	116.13	120.59	3.80
By expenditure			
Private consumption	73.08	76.90	5.30
Government consumption	30.45	30.05	-1.30
Gross capital formation	6.30	9.65	53.20
Exports of goods and services	-	20.14	59.10
Imports of goods and services	5.75	-16.16	181.00
GDP	116.74	120.58	3.30

(Source: Central Bank of Nigeria, quoted in EIU Nigeria Country Report 2001)

External trade

As noted above, the growing importance of oil created distortions in the Nigerian economy. The non-oil exports sector dropped (cocoa, groundnuts, rubber, cotton, palm produce, and solid minerals), and this changed the structure of external trade, thus creating imbalances in the economy. The pattern and trend of external trade and the balance-of-payments position further explain the over-dependence of the economy on oil and its vulnerability to external shocks.²⁰⁵ The dependence of domestic production and consumption on the availability of foreign exchange is so high that when the price of oil collapsed in the 1980s, a spiral effect was felt in all sectors of the economy. The rate of growth of the economy took a downturn, which was exacerbated by the government's resort to excessive borrowing on the domestic front and externally. The cumulative effect was a sharp rise in the external debt situation, to reach a high of

US \$30.1 billion in 1999.²⁰⁶ The resultant effects in terms of poverty of the people are analysed in Chapter 9.

Economic structure and poverty

The structural imbalances of the economy, an inappropriate development agenda, and the debt burden, it has been argued, are major causes of the poverty prevailing in Nigeria. Available information shows that per capita income, which was around US\$1000 in the 1980s, dropped to US\$310 in 1999. The incidence of poverty increased from 27.2 per cent of the population in 1980 to 65.6 per cent in 1996, and it is estimated the incidence increases by 10 per cent every three years. As a result of the high incidence of poverty, Nigeria was ranked 151 among 174 poor countries²⁰⁷ by the year 2000.

Policy directions: past governments

Various governments in the past have implemented economic policy measures with a view to resuscitating the Nigerian economy. The effect has been minimal, as a result of frequent coups and inconsistency in the implementation of policies and programmes. A review of the effectiveness of these policies concluded that 'given the escalation in the number of people in poverty between 1986 and now, we cannot but conclude that all the programmes have failed to achieve their overarching objective'.²⁰⁸

The Vision 2010 policy document focused on the following central themes:

- Maintenance of macro-economic stability and economic growth.
- Improved governance at all levels.
- Re-allocation of public-sector spending to favour the social sector.
- Progressive deregulation of the domestic economy through enhanced private-sector development.

The Vision document has been described as 'the most comprehensive policy and the one close to a consensus-based policy agenda'.²⁰⁹ This is because its formulation involved various interest groups. Yet analysts have pointed out that the document did not take into consideration the views of the populace as a whole, and viewed development from the perspective of economic growth – the 'trickle down' approach.²¹⁰ The

UNDP *Human Development Report 2001* comments: 'the most serious weakness is no doubt its insufficient attention to the poverty problem of Nigeria and the great danger it (poverty) poses in all spheres of human endeavours – politics, economics, sociology and culture.'²¹¹ With regard to its usefulness in contemporary Nigeria, it has been described as out of date and unrealistic.²¹²

Reasons for the poor performance of the economy

The next section reviews some of the policies identified as having created structural imbalances in the economy.

Deregulation and inefficient infrastructure

The deregulation and drastic reduction of tariff and non-tariff barriers and the persistent failure to provide an efficient and cost-effective infrastructure have affected the development of the country. The effect is that Nigerian manufacturers have to provide their own electricity, water, transport, and even security services to supplement the inadequate and unreliable supplies from the public sector. This pushes up the cost of production, thus making the products uncompetitive. Production declines, and so do employment opportunities.

Openness of the economy

The economy was prematurely opened up and is over-dependent on the international economy for food and other consumer items. The high level of cheap food imports affects the incomes of domestic farmers, who have to pay more for inputs and other services. In addition, the situation places undue stress on foreign exchange and also pushes up inflation.

Debt burden

Nigeria's heavy burden of debt (both domestic and external)²¹³ has discouraged private investment. This situation has put undue pressure on government revenue and made it difficult, if not impossible, to provide the infrastructure required to boost both agricultural and industrial activities. In addition, the people are denied access to basic social services such as water, health care, and education.

Current focus for economic reform

The economic policy guidelines of the present government are contained in the policy framework 'Nigerian Economic Policy 1999 – 2003'. This document states that when the present administration took over office in May 1999,

'it inherited an economy with the following characteristics: declining capacity utilisation in the real sector, poor performance of major infrastructural facilities, large budget deficit, rising level of unemployment and inflation'.²¹⁴ To address the situation, the Government defined the following policy objectives:

- Revive and grow Nigeria's comatose economy.
- Significantly raise the standard of living of the people.
- Put Nigerians back to gainful work and create new employment opportunities.
- Reposition the economy to participate beneficially in the global economy.
- Make Nigeria the hub of the West African economy.

In line with these objectives, the various sectoral ministries formulated appropriate policies for achieving the goals set through the budgetary process.

Review of budgets

The policy framework has served as the guideline for development and preparation of annual budgets. Hence the need to review them in order to assess how the government's policy is contributing towards poverty reduction in the country. The objectives set under the 2001 budget were as follows:

- Restructuring of the Nigerian economy to make it market-oriented, private-sector led, and technology-driven.
- Reduction of unemployment and increase in productivity, while maintaining stable prices and exchange rate stability, and a healthy balance of payments.
- Improvement in power supply, telecommunications, and transport.
- Improvement in credit delivery and extension services to small and medium-scale enterprises.

The objectives make it clear that the budget aims to increase capital expenditure. Table 5 shows the projections for the government's capital expenditure for the year 2001.

The figures in Table 5 indicate that education, health care, and agriculture are still under-financed, in spite of the commitment in the budget statement to priorities these sectors. Another review pointed out that such a large

Table 5: Approved capital expenditure for 2001

Power and steel	N69.8 billion	26 per cent
Works and housing	N53 billion	20 per cent
Water resources	N49.8 billion	19 per cent
Education	N24.8 billion	9 per cent
Health	N29.1 billion	11 per cent
Transport	N23.0 billion	9 per cent
Agriculture	N18.1 billion	7 per cent

(Source: *Approved Budget: 2001 Fiscal Year*)

increase in capital expenditure has now become a major problem, owing to its inflationary impact, its impact on the exchange rate by boosting liquidity in the foreign-exchange market, and the opportunities for corruption that such a large spending spree has created.²¹⁵ Others have indicated that in spite of efforts to rein in expenditure, in response to pressure from the IMF,²¹⁶ a deficit of 4.3 per cent of GDP was estimated for 2001, as compared with 2.9 per cent in 2000. Other critics (including donors and the IMF) have pointed out that the budget will absorb excess oil proceeds from 2000, and the increased capital budget will stimulate inflation, and it is therefore not a poverty-driven budget.²¹⁷

The 2002 budget

The objectives of the 2002 outlined were stated as follows:

- The alleviation of poverty by fostering opportunities for job creation.
- The achievement of high economic growth rates through better mobilisation and prudent use of economic resources.
- The building of a strong economy by encouraging private-sector participation, while providing continuity to economic reform programmes.
- Ensuring good governance by transforming development administration into a service- and result-oriented system.

The contents of the budget statement were discussed by some civil-society organisations at a workshop on budget monitoring, organised by Shelter Rights Initiative. Participants subjected the budget to serious scrutiny and made the following comments.

- The allocation of N14.8 billion to health is low and will not ensure improvements in the quality of services.

- N4 billion allocated to agriculture is inadequate. The sector is the major employer of the active labour force and a major contributor to GDP and therefore requires more resources. To under-finance it would hamper efforts to achieve the goal of poverty alleviation, as indicated in the budget statement.
- The allocations of 1.2 per cent, 0.09 per cent, 0.72 per cent, 4 per cent, and less than 2 per cent to Science and Technology, Solid Minerals, Industry, Employment, and Women and Youth Development respectively will not result in poverty eradication.
- N22 billion for the construction sector and upgrading of infrastructure in the Federal Capital Territory is unrealistic, because the FCT already has a fairly good infrastructure.
- The allocation of N15 billion to Sports and Social Development and N49.8 billion to Defence is a misplacement of priorities and will not result in poverty alleviation.

Generally, it was observed that although the policy thrust of the budget was laudable, it did not address the development needs of the country. Again, the 38 per cent cut in capital expenditure, alongside the huge allocations made to the non-productive sectors, will obviously retard growth. The overall assessment was that the budget could not achieve its objectives.

The government is implementing various policy mixes. Their effectiveness is explored in the next section.

Assessment of policy since 1999

Table 6 shows that the budget deficit rose to 8.4 per cent of GDP in 1999, from 4.7 per cent in the previous year, but dropped in 2000 to 2.9 per cent. The budget deficit for 2000 was financed mainly by issuing treasury bills, while the strategy of the previous years included the drawing down of foreign reserves.

The structure of expenditure also shows the dominant role of recurrent expenditure. This implies that fewer resources are allocated to the sectors that will ensure a reduction in poverty. Analysts expressed shock over the drop in government revenue in 2000, in spite of increases in price for oil that year and the realisation of an amount of N18.1 billion (US \$177 million) from the privatisation exercise of that year.

In assessing the performance of the economy since 1999, one observer noted that most ordinary Nigerians are still waiting to enjoy the

Table 6: Summary of budget figures (1998 – 2000)
(N billion unless otherwise indicated)

	1998	1999	2000
Federal Government Retained Revenue	353.7	662.6	597.3
Total Expenditure	487.1	947.7	701.1
Recurrent	178.1	449.6	461.6
Capital and net lending	309.0	498.0	239.5
Deficit	133.4	285.1	103.8
per cent of GDP	4	1	8
Financing			
Net foreign	16.6	21.0	0.0
Net domestic	116.8	264.1	103.8

(Source: Central Bank of Nigeria, quoted in EIU Nigeria 2001 Report)

'democracy dividends ... The economy grew modestly in 2000 ... the non-oil sector stagnated. Meanwhile basic business infrastructure has continued to crumble ... Economic reforms have been few and poorly implemented.'²¹⁸

The Central Bank, in its Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for 2000, observed:

One of the key aspects of recent budgetary reforms by government is to shift expenditure from transfers, which has constituted the bulk of expenditure in the last ten years, to social and economic services ... The aim of higher allocation is to improve quality and access to the services while keeping costs within reasonable limits. Available data showed significant increase in Federal Government expenditure on education and health in 2000 ... Yet this performance falls below the average for developing countries ... In order to reduce poverty and illiteracy and enhance economic development, government has to match its promises with substantial increases in allocations to the education and health sectors ... it is important to ensure that there is value for money spent on education and health sectors, through effective monitoring and cost control. The need for proper coordination of the efforts of all tiers of government in the provision of education and health services cannot be overemphasised.

Poverty-eradication efforts

Past governments

Between 1986 and 1993, elaborate poverty-eradication programmes were initiated. The initiatives focused on food and agricultural

production, mobilisation, participation, employment, and skills improvements; but they failed to achieve the desired goals. It was during this period that institutions such as the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) and the National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) were established. Programmes initiated included Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) and Community Action Programme for Poverty Alleviation (CAPPA).

In assessing the effectiveness of these programmes, it has been observed that those who captured the benefits of the initiatives were not the poor: they were the rich and the powerful. This, not surprisingly, brought frustration and disillusionment to the poor and, inevitably, discontent and resentment.²¹⁹ UNDP identified the greatest flaw in these poverty-alleviation strategies as 'their top-down approach', adding: 'These initiatives resulted in the creation of a multiplicity of institutions with overlapping roles and responsibilities, and very little was achieved. ... State and Local Governments were reduced to mere implementing authorities. ... The various programmes were not synchronised with community needs.'²²⁰

Another source pronounced the following verdict on these initiatives: 'the programmes expected to impact positively on the poor did not achieve the goals because of (the) absence of a policy framework and undue political interference.'²²¹

The present government

The present government's policy objective for poverty alleviation 'is to broaden the opportunities available to the poor and ensure that every Nigerian has access to basic needs of life: food, potable water, clothing, shelter, basic health services and nutrition, basic education and communications as well as guaranteed respect for fundamental human rights. The overall goal is improved living conditions for the poor in Nigeria.'²²²

In order to implement its policy on poverty alleviation, the government set up in 1999 the Presidential Panel on Streamlining and Rationalisation of Poverty Alleviation Institutions and Agencies. The panel was asked to assess why the various institutions and agencies established under various poverty-alleviation programmes had been ineffective and inefficient in their performance, and to make recommendations on how poverty could be eradicated and the well-being of the people improved. The outcome

of the work of the panel was the setting up of the National Poverty Eradication Council (NAPEC),²²³ with responsibility for co-ordinating poverty-reduction activities. Various institutions were identified, at various levels, as those that should be involved in the government's poverty-eradication drive.

The President vividly articulated the government's policy statement on poverty in his budget statement for the fiscal year 2000. The key elements include the preparation of a Medium Term Poverty Reduction Plan and the creation of a poverty-reduction fund. On the process for the preparation of the Plan, the President stated:

*our strategy would be to identify priority programmes and projects in the areas of rural electrification, water supply, women and youth development, primary health care, agriculture, food security and education. This project would be grassroots initiated. The State Governments and Local Governments will be fully involved in the design and actual implementation of the programmes that best suit their environments. The Federal Government will therefore serve primarily as a catalyst and mobiliser of resources.*²²⁴

The above statement shows that government has recognised the need for a broad-based participation in the poverty-reduction drive. It also recognises that the Federal Government is only a facilitator and cannot take direct responsibility for implementation. This is the line that policy makers need to pursue in order to ensure that the 'grassroots' referred to by the government goes beyond State and Local Governments to include communities and civil-society organisations. Involvement of the people requires a transfer of ownership of the process of formulating poverty-eradication programmes from the Ministries to the local level. This is about popular participation, it is about sustaining democracy, and it is about promoting good governance.

A review of the present policy on poverty alleviation revealed that 'the new institutional landscape for poverty alleviation and eradication is much more elaborate than the one criticised in the NHDR 1998'.²²⁵ In addition, State and Local Governments, community-based institutions, and for that matter the poor have not been incorporated.

'While an elaborate institutional arrangement remains the focus, the proportion of poor people has increased in relationship to the total population. It is estimated that 66 per cent of the population or 70 million people in 2000 were classified as poor, as against 55 million people

in 1998.'²²⁶ However, as we have seen, there continues to be a lack of commitment in terms of budgetary allocation to the social sector.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Process (PRSP)

The donor community in Nigeria had been discussing the need to prepare a Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) since 2000. The government made a commitment to get the document prepared by the end of 2000, but by July 2001 this had not happened.²²⁷ The process for preparing the PRSP has now been initiated, and an Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy (IPRS) has been prepared.

Timeframe

The introduction to the IPRS document explains the background and the timeframe set by the World Bank and the IMF. It notes that '... the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in their Annual General Meetings in September, 1999 announced that their future concessional assistance would be tied to the preparation of an appropriate PRSP ... and a deadline of end-June 2002 has been set ... to submit their full PRSPs.' The document continues: 'in the same vein Nigeria has embarked on preparing its own PRSP as a requirement for concessional assistance'. It further notes: 'given the importance of the subject matter and the tight time-table, the Nigerian authorities fully recognise the need to move forward expeditiously to the timely completion of the country's PRSP.'²²⁸

Rationale

The IPRS document explains the rationale for the PRSP thus: '... to ensure that official policies and resource use in general ... are properly geared towards poverty reduction in a recipient country as a priority objective of policy interventions. The expectation is that an appropriate PRSP will underpin the primacy of poverty reduction in public policies, thereby avoiding the mistakes of the past when measured *economic growth* was not always accompanied by significant reduction in poverty' (emphasis by authors).

Participation

To prepare the PRSP, the government established a Core Team, which included representatives of civil society and the organised private sector. The IPRS was the subject of discussion by a cross-section of various stakeholders at a workshop organised by the government in February 2002. Another workshop was organised by

ActionAid and the Centre for Policy and Private Co-operation (CPPC), with support from the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID), to create a platform for a broader spectrum of civil-society organisations to map out a strategy for engaging in the process.

Assessment of poverty-reduction efforts

Much as all these initiatives are geared towards ensuring a broad range of input on the need for poverty eradication and to ensure a wider participation in the process, the lack of a PRSP for Nigeria confirms the argument that there is no systematic and strategic framework that gives direction to poverty eradication in the country.²²⁹ It is not surprising that most of the efforts over the years to eradicate/alleviate/eliminate poverty were and are still *ad hoc* measures.²³⁰ Although there has been some level of consultation, it has been limited to a few élite institutions and some civil-society organisations.²³¹

What is the process?

A World Bank official, presenting a paper on the 'Principles of PRSP Approach',²³² noted that the new approach does not start with various poverty programmes put forward by sectoral ministries; it *ends* with such programmes. In the new approach, poverty programmes are derived from a distillation of each aspect of poverty into component parts. The statement continues by observing that another key difference from the traditional approach is the direct engagement of beneficiaries and stakeholders in the analysis and development of solutions.

These remarks are helpful in assessing whether those engaged in the process have adequately analysed each aspect of poverty, taking into consideration the 'voices of the poor', and whether they have seriously engaged all stakeholders in the debate on how to address the problems of poverty in Nigeria, as has been recommended by some of the sources reviewed.²³³

Other government policy initiatives

Other policy initiatives implemented by the government in order to address problems associated with the Nigerian economy include the following:

- The fight against corruption, and value-for-money audits.
- Discontinuation of off-budget 'dedicated' accounts linked to the oil sector.
- Commitment to a review of public expenditure.

- Exploration of strategies to broaden the revenue base of the economy.
- Privatisation and liberalisation of the economy (for example, the sale of public assets).
- Strengthening relationships with the IMF/World Bank and the Paris Club.
- The establishment of the Nigerian Debt Management Office.
- Intensified advocacy for debt cancellation.
- Restructuring of operations at the ports.
- Reforms of the financial sector.
- Asserting Nigeria's role in the region (for example, its membership of NEPAD – the New Partnership for African Development).

It has been observed that much as these are laudable initiatives, they are yet to make a concrete contribution to a coherent development agenda for the country. The fact that the government has embarked on a process of examining issues related to macro-economic growth, and prudent management of the economy and poverty reduction in general, is a sign of its commitment to turn the economy around. As has been pointed out, poverty reduction goes beyond statements of intent. 'What is required, is the ability for the three levels of government in Nigeria to co-operate and work together in the true spirit of co-operative federalism with full local participation in policy formulation and programme and project implementation.'²³⁴

The way forward

Nigeria has had a long history of devising mechanisms for improving the economy with a view to reducing poverty. However, poverty has not been reduced as a result. We have argued that this is because of a lack of commitment, the misplacement of priorities, and the abandonment of initiatives started by previous governments – or a combination of these.

Generally, most of the policies designed were not based on the principles of popular participation; they therefore tended to operate from top downwards. In addition, addressing poverty has been viewed from the perspective of economic growth, without focusing on the inter-relatedness of sectors and the multi-dimensional nature of poverty. The analysis of poverty in the IPRSP document does not consider urban and rural poverty from a livelihood perspective, and this may doom it to failure. In the words of Shelter

Rights Initiative: 'the document ended up being a cut and paste revision of Nigeria's old and discredited poverty reduction strategies, which have been experimented with, and failed.'²³⁵

To help to re-focus policy formulation on the reduction of poverty, the NHDR 2000/2001 has re-articulated some of the prescriptions documented in the 1998 edition. It also incorporates the findings of the People's Development Vision, and other meticulously researched information. The recommendations for a way forward are as follows.

- Full utilisation of the country's under-utilised industrial and agricultural capacities, including large reductions in post-harvest losses.
- Improvement in the domestic competitiveness of the Nigerian economy by the provision, in an adequate cost-effective manner, of basic infrastructural facilities.
- Massive investment in high-quality technological education, particularly in information and communications technologies and biotechnology.
- Implementing fully the United Nations Millennium Goals – to reduce (eradicate) poverty by 50 per cent by the year 2015.
- Deepening on-going reform programmes aimed at enhancing due process, accountability, and professionalism.
- Intensifying regional integration efforts by capitalising on Nigeria's vast market potentials and significant comparative advantage.
- Strengthening partnerships between civil society and the State, so as to ensure effective popular participation in the development process.
- Promotion of good governance and building a national consensus on the development paradigm.

Conclusion

In any nation, the level of development depends on the efficiency of its social sector (education and health care), its financial sector (money and capital markets), its infrastructural sector (power supplies, transport, and communications), as well as its governance. Poverty eradication depends on the creative interplay and effective management of these sectors.

It is evident that both past and present governments have pursued policies aimed at poverty alleviation. In spite of these, poverty is still pervasive in Nigeria, because of a lack of funding, incoherent institutional arrangements, and implementation of *ad hoc* measures. To summarise: poverty alleviation is still a myth, because the process of policy formulation and implementation does not include a full range of civil-society representatives, because programmes are not cost-effective, and because the institutional structures established to manage the various programmes are inefficient and unaccountable.

6 Trade and poverty in Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria's most recent trade policy, prepared in 1991/92, has been reviewed, and a new one is currently being formulated. The direction of the present government's trade policy is outlined in a document entitled 'Federal Republic of Nigeria – Obasanjo's Economic Direction 1999 – 2003'.

This chapter examines present trade and economic policies and considers their contribution to poverty reduction in Nigeria. It also takes a cursory look at regional efforts designed to encourage trade and other forms of co-operation. This is followed by an exploration of the potential effects (positive and negative) of globalisation. The institutional dimensions of managing trade and the role of civil society are also explored.

Current trade policy

Nigeria's economic-policy framework has the following as its key elements:

- Maintenance of disciplined fiscal and monetary policy.
- Continued liberalisation of the economy to attract assistance from the international community.
- Improved security of life and property.
- Sustained transparency, accountability, and value for money in the procurement of products and services for government.
- Diversification of the economy through increased private-sector participation in production and exports of manufactured goods.
- Accelerated implementation of the privatisation and deregulation programme.
- Upgraded performance of key infrastructure, using private-sector participation whenever feasible.
- Improved human capital through targeted investment in health, education, sanitation, and skills acquisition.

In reviewing trade policies of the past, the government's policy framework acknowledges:

*... trade and distribution were characterised by inter-regional trade barriers, many layers of distribution that raise the cost of goods; bureaucracy in the implementation of trade incentives including long delays in business registration, payment of export-rebate incentives etc; and the dumping of substandard and subsidised goods. The non-implementation of the ECOWAS Treaty on Free Trade for many years after its ratification served as a serious disincentive to exploring the potential of West Africa Trade. The large number of security agents at the ports and the long procedures for goods clearance were further impediments to trade.*²³⁶

Policy strategies

The government has committed itself to strengthening trade as an instrument for achieving accelerated economic development. To achieve this, the government outlined its policy direction for foreign trade as follows:

- Effective implementation of incentives and their review, where necessary.
- Market search, establishment of export houses, and bilateral trade negotiations to diversify trade.
- Establishment of reciprocal trade and investment centres.
- Establishment of a databank on trade and related matters.
- Adoption of measures for exploring the potential of Africa for trade.
- Effective implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol on free movement of goods and people.
- Full operationalisation of the existing Export Promotion Zones (EPZs), the establishment of new ones, and the granting of export-processing status to deserving factories that contribute to non-oil exports.
- Encouragement of the establishment of the Export Production Village scheme at the grassroots level.

- Institutional strengthening and reorientation of staff, and streamlining of procedures and processes .
- Continuous reforms at ports, and measures to check dumping.

Some of the measures initiated by the government so far include:²³⁷

- Review of customs tariffs with a view to raising revenue, as well as protecting domestic industry.
- Export-prohibition strategies, aimed at not only boosting government's revenue base, but encouraging the agricultural sector, thereby increasing the income of farmers.
- Export promotion and incentives to encourage non-oil exports and reduce the over-dependence on oil revenue.
- Trade liberalisation to meet the demands of international financial institutions and the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (TLS).
- Port reforms and measures to ensure timely clearance of goods and ridding the ports of malpractices.
- Inspection at destinations to replace pre-shipment inspection.
- Streamlining the exchange regime.

Trade and the economy

The monocultural economy of Nigeria is exposed to shocks beyond the control of the government. These shocks have adversely affected the government's ability to meet the needs and aspirations of the people. To clarify this point, it has been stated that 'the economy was (is) still beset with lingering problems of low output growth relative to the population growth rate, unemployment and external debt overhang. Furthermore, the pace of economic recovery suffered a setback following intensification of pressure on external sector as the world price of oil slumped while the growth rate of non-oil exports remained weak.'²³⁸ It has also been observed that the pressure on the balance of payments eased considerably in 2000, because of the effect of higher oil prices in the international market.²³⁹ These two statements expose the economy's dangerous degree of dependency on the oil sector.

Patterns of external trade

Table 7: Value of Nigeria's exports and imports, 1996–2000

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Export of goods (US\$ million)	16,117	15,539	10,114	11,927	20,441
Import of goods (US\$ million)	6,438	9,630	9,276	10,531	12,372

(Source: Central Bank of Nigeria Annual Report 2000)

Table 7 shows that the value of exports declined between 1997 and 1999, but rose again in 2000. This is mainly due to the drop in oil prices during the period. The table also shows an increase in imports, which the Central Bank explains is as a 'result of increased demand for finished goods and foreign inputs for the manufacturing sector'.²⁴⁰

Another dimension worth examining is the direction of trade, as depicted in Tables 8 and 9. The flow of exports shows an over-dependence on industrialised countries, while intra-Africa trade is very minimal, although there has been an increase over the period. In reviewing the direction of trade, with particular reference to oil exports, it is noted that the Americas remained the largest buyer of Nigeria's crude oil, followed by Western Europe, while the export share taken up by Asian and African countries fell during the period 1988–1996.²⁴¹

Table 8: Destination of Nigeria's exports (% of total)

Destination of exports	1988	1996
Industrial Countries	88.1	79.9
Developing Countries	11.3	19.7
Africa	6.5	8.5
Developing Asia	0.5	7.5
Middle East	0.1	-
Latin America	4.2	3.7

(Source: UNCTAD 1998, quoted in EIU 2001 Nigeria Report)

Table 9: Main origins of Nigeria's exports and imports (% of total)

Exports	
USA	46.1
Spain	10.7
India	6.1
France	5.2
Imports	
UK	10.9
USA	9.2
France	8.7
Germany	7.4

Recent figures indicated that in 1999, 48.9 per cent of total crude-oil exports went to the USA, while the figure for 2000 was 56.2 per cent. In the same years, crude-oil exports to Africa accounted for 9.6 per cent and 8.0 per cent respectively. In view of the excessive dependence of Nigeria's trade on sales to the USA, it has been proposed that regional trade, particularly within the West African sub-region, needs to be boosted as part of the drive towards establishing a private-sector driven economy (improving local manufacture and exports).²⁴²

Problems associated with trade

In examining the importance of trade in relationship to poverty alleviation, it is also important to consider the composition of trade. See Table 10, which shows that the contribution of the non-oil imports sector is still low, in spite of government's efforts to revamp the sub-sector. The factors accounting for the poor performance of the sector are the following:²⁴³

- Inefficient implementation of Export Incentives and Support Programmes.
- Inadequate and decaying infrastructure.

- Funding and financing constraints.
- Rigidity in trade procedures.
- Inadequate capitalisation of the Nigerian Export-Import Bank (NEXIM).
- Underdeveloped regional and sub-regional markets.
- Policy instability/inconsistency.

Regional co-operation

The government has over the years shown its commitment to regional co-operation. This is manifested in the number of bilateral joint commission meetings in which Nigeria has participated, involving countries such as Chad, South Africa, Morocco, Equatorial Guinea, and Namibia.²⁴⁴ They focused mainly on trade, transport and aviation, petroleum products, rural development, communication, education and culture, emigration, consular matters, and security. Other areas of interest are taxation, investment, exploration, mining, minerals, and energy. Nigeria is also a member of regional forums such as the Assembly of Governors of the Association of African Central Banks, African Development Bank Group.

Nigeria has been a leading member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and continues to play a major role in the promotion of both political and economic integration within the sub-region. The country has endorsed the establishment of the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ) and the Multi-lateral Surveillance Mechanism for monitoring macro-economic performance in member countries. In addition, significant progress has been made at the ECOWAS sub-regional level in the area of economic integration through the Fast Track Approach, which aims to eliminate

Table 10: Composition of Nigeria's trade

Principal exports (2000)	Value (US\$ million)	Principal imports	Value (US\$ million)
Oil	18,597	Manufactured goods	2,746
Non-oil	244	Machinery	2,282
		Chemicals	2,149
		Food and oils	1,117

(Source: CBN Annual Report 2000, quoted in EIU Nigeria Report 2001)

barriers to trade as well as enhance monetary co-operation among member countries.²⁴⁵

On the continental scene, the government is a co-sponsor of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). This initiative aims to promote good governance within the continent. It focuses on implementation of poverty-reduction initiatives and development of a common agenda for industrial and technological advancement, while taking into consideration the comparative advantages of the individual countries. Important among the aims is the joint call by African Heads of States for debt cancellation for the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC). This new initiative is part of the larger agenda of building an African Union.

Globalisation

It is common to hear people talk of the world becoming a global village, based on improvements in digital technology which have made it possible for countries, people, and businesses to relate without difficulty. The process has been hastened by the emergence of transnational corporations.²⁴⁶ Although globalisation is multi-dimensional, 'it is the economic dimension of globalisation – the integration of domestic economies with the world economy and the inevitable consequential increase in the economic interdependence of the countries through trade and free factor movements and flows – that is perceived to constitute the heart of the globalisation process'.²⁴⁷

It is often argued that globalisation promotes trade and contributes to growth and development. This may be true, but globalisation could also adversely affect a country's interests, and it is certainly true that not all countries are benefiting from the process. For example, economies with a surplus of labour suffer poor terms of trade; those that depend on earnings from agriculture suffer from unfair competition with subsidised exports from advanced-economy nations; and international patent laws favour the interests of transnational corporations over those of developing nations.

Nigeria and the global economy

Nigeria, the tenth most populous country in the world, with an estimated population of 120 million and rich natural resources, has a great potential in the global market.²⁴⁸ However, as we have seen, its infrastructure is weak, its technical

manpower is inadequate, and the economy is still over-dependent on the oil sector.

The benefits to a State of engagement in a global economy cannot be achieved until it has learned to manage its resources rationally. In the case of Nigeria, it has been observed that 'if the nation is to secure a sympathetic hearing to its plea for debt relief and increased flow of foreign direct investment to the agricultural, industrial and infrastructural sectors, not just to mining and oil exploration, then the governments and legislative assemblies at all levels must manifest always signs of financial prudence'.²⁴⁹

In addition, for Nigeria to compete in the global markets, it must commit itself to certain imperative priorities:²⁵⁰ create an environment for enterprise and investment; promote the production of public goods such as infrastructure and banking services; promote an efficient social sector (education and health care); and encourage educational and technological development.

Globalisation goes with trade liberalisation, and together, Oxfam has argued, they can have destabilising effects on national economies and local communities.²⁵¹ All too often, transnational corporations dominate investment, production, and trade, imposing changes which favour rich countries and technology suppliers. Trade liberalisation and poverty reduction are not particularly consistent policies in an economy where structural imbalances are pronounced, and the people lack basic services.

In spite of the lack of current data, it is important to understand the institutional arrangements for managing external trade in Nigeria. The Ministry of Commerce has an External Trade Department, which is charged with the responsibility of facilitating efficient external trade, by creating market access for Nigerian products abroad and the dissemination of relevant trade information. The Department also co-ordinates the country's participation in multilateral trade organisations such as the WTO, UNCTAD, and Regional Trade Arrangements. For purposes of effective participation in trade negotiations, the government has established the National Focal Point on Multilateral Trade Matters (this is a multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary group, which includes the organised private sector). In addition, the government has opened a Trade Mission in Geneva, charged with responsibility for protecting and defending the country's trade interests as well as participating in trade negotiations.

Trade policies and poverty reduction

Export promotion

Some commentators on the government's policy strategies and their impact on poverty have argued that not all the necessary conditions are in place to ensure their effectiveness. On export prohibition, for instance, it has been stated that 'inadequate additional investment in the agricultural sector to meet domestic demand and exports will create supply problems and contribute to macroeconomic instability.'²⁵² With regard to export promotion, the same source observes that past export-promotion measures and incentives do not constitute a sufficient condition for increased earnings from non-oil exports, because they do not address fundamental constraints on production and supply.

Trade liberalisation

The situation with regard to trade liberalisation is not different. It has been argued that 'given the import dependent nature of our production structure, unfettered trade liberalisation will tend to ruin domestic industries and destroy supply capacity as a result of prohibitive imported input costs, while imported finished goods will continue to flourish at the expense of local substitutes'.²⁵³ On adoption of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme, the following comment has been made: 'the non-implementation of the TLS is predicated on lack of political will and commitment on the part of member states, proliferation of rival sub-groupings and inter-governmental organisations, and the pervasiveness of foreign influence.'²⁵⁴

Another dimension to consider is that the openness of the Nigerian economy has resulted in an adverse trade situation, which has impeded the development of the country. The result is that Nigeria has become a major importer of food, although it abounds with rich natural resources and has a largely agrarian population. It is estimated that the value of food imports rose from N57.7 million in 1970 to N1437.5 in 1980, to N1646.5 in 1987, and N88.0 billion in 1996.²⁵⁵ Food now accounts for about 10 per cent of total imports,²⁵⁶ in spite of the numerous agricultural programmes implemented over the years to boost domestic food production.²⁵⁷

To explain why the trade regime makes it difficult for Nigeria to address the problem of

widespread poverty, it has been argued that high demand for foreign exchange to pay for imports diverts available revenue from social-service provision. Over-dependence on oil exposes the country's vulnerability, especially as the shift from major exports such as palm oil and kernel, groundnuts, and rubber has reduced the revenue base of the economy. Trade liberalisation has created fierce competition for local industries because of the influx of cheap manufactured goods, which have killed domestic initiatives as well as increasing the level of unemployment. Finally, high imports of food have resulted in low incomes for domestic farmers, thus forcing them to explore other avenues for sustaining their livelihoods.

Challenges to making trade the engine of growth

We have seen that Nigeria has not been able to participate effectively in the global economy because of pervasive poverty, pandemic corruption, marginalisation, the persistence of structural vulnerability and over-dependence on oil, the dispossession of the mass of the people, and the crippling burden of debt.²⁵⁸ In truth, Nigeria could be a force to reckon with in global markets, but it has been marginalised from full participation, and thus its efforts to reduce poverty are severely compromised. Some of the challenges facing the government are examined in this section.

Institutional strengthening and skills development

Nigeria has taken up the challenge of co-ordinating initiatives with other developing countries on issues related to WTO negotiations, in addition to managing the implementation of its trade policy. To do these effectively requires skills in policy analysis, monitoring and evaluation, negotiation of technical trade issues, and development of strategies for implementing existing trade agreements. It is also important to relate these agreements and protocols to existing legislation. The skills required are lacking and need to be developed within government institutions.

Engagement with civil society

Another dimension of the challenge is how to harness civil society to act as a force that will not

only monitor the government's trade policies and participate in international trade negotiations, but also join the international movement against the lopsided world trade regime, which tends to impoverish African and developing countries. The challenge is even more critical in Nigeria, where most civil-society organisations do not have the necessary skills, or easy access to Internet facilities required for linking up with the world movement against unfair terms of trade. According to the UNDP, 'educating, mobilising and motivating civil society to comprehend the nature and challenges of globalisation is a formidable task'.²⁵⁹

Linking national development and regional integration

With regard to globalisation, the challenge is to complement and supplement national efforts by extra-national efforts such as rejuvenating and re-orienting regionalism and accelerating the operationalisation of the African Community Treaty of 1991 (now the African Union).²⁶⁰

Conclusion

The government of Nigeria is implementing a mix of macro-economic and trade policies with a view to revamping the economy and thereby improving the welfare of the people. Government recognises that it can only act as facilitator, creating an enabling environment so that the private sector will lead the path to development. It also recognises the need to revamp traditional exports such as palm oil, cocoa, rubber, and other agricultural products, while it also increases trade within the West African sub-region by exporting industrial products. These policies are, however, being implemented within a framework of weak economic structure and uneven global environment, thus posing greater challenges to poverty reduction in the country. Excessive liberalisation of the economy at this stage of the country's development may slow down the pace of at which poverty can be reduced.

It has also been argued that the Nigerian economy could greatly benefit from trade, provided that the right policies are formulated. It is a potential market as well as a potential supplier of goods and services to other countries in Africa. But to achieve this requires a restructuring of the national economy and provision of appropriate infrastructure, at the same time as focusing on improving the living conditions of the people. It also requires full popular participation, social discipline, and leaders who seek *development*, not merely growth.

7 Environment and poverty in Nigeria

Introduction

'The environment', in development terms, has been defined as the 'life supporting system for human existence and survival as well as provider of physical milieu and raw materials required for socio-economic progress'.²⁶¹ The natural-resource mix shapes human productive and social activities as well as social structures and relations. In view of this, the protection of the environment should be included in the formulation of political, economic, and social policies. A recognition of the importance of the environment for human survival resulted in the issuing of Agenda 21 by the Earth Summit in 1992, which urged all nations to include environmental protection as an integral part of the development process.²⁶²

This chapter seeks to assess the links between environment and poverty within the Nigerian context. The analysis begins with a review of the institutional set-up and policy framework for environmental management. It also considers core environment issues such as soil erosion, drought and desertification, biodiversity, and urbanisation. This is followed by an assessment of the effectiveness of policies relating to poverty and core environmental issues. The challenges to environmental management are also explored. The way forward, as proposed in the sources reviewed, is highlighted in a section which leads in to the conclusion.

Institutional and policy framework

Institutional arrangements

In recognition of the importance of addressing the problem of environmental degradation, the government of Nigeria established the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) in 1988. Its duties included the management and monitoring of environmental standards; devising policies for the protection of the environment (biodiversity, conservation, etc.); the sustainable development of Nigeria's natural resources;

and the development and operation of procedures for conducting environmental-impact assessments of all development projects.

To ensure that the FEPA is empowered to manage environmental issues, the Environmental Impact Assessment Act was subsequently passed.

The Environmental Impact Assessment Act (1992)

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Act reaffirmed the powers of the FEPA and defined the minimum requirements for an EIA. But it has been argued that the law fails to protect the rights of people who may face eviction as a result of a particular project, in spite of the fact that this is an internationally recognised procedure.

The EIA Act empowers the Agency to ensure the implementation of mitigation measures and follow-up programmes such as the elimination, reduction, or control of the adverse environmental effects of any project; the restitution of any damage caused by such effects, through replacement, restoration, compensation or any other means; verification of the accuracy of the environmental assessment of a project; and determination of the effectiveness of any measures taken to mitigate the adverse effects of any project.

Policy

To enhance the work of FEPA, the government formulated an environmental policy in 1989. In spite of these efforts, it has been argued that 'Nigeria continues to face critical environmental problems that should be promptly addressed'.²⁶³ In order to give environmental issues greater consideration, the present administration created a Ministry of Environment in 1999, thus bringing agencies such as the FEPA and the Environmental Health Unit of the Ministry of Health under one administrative system.

In the same year, the 1989 policy was revised. Some elements of the revised policy²⁶⁴ as they relate to manufacturing are the following:

- New industries should carry out environmental impact assessments as a pre-condition for issuing of permits.

- Installation of effluent-treatment facilities should be included during the planning process.
- Existing industries must install effluent-treatment plants and establish environmental control units.
- Waste must be recycled.
- Effluent discharge from industries should be monitored on a regular and continuous basis.

Other policy measures implemented include a review of the National Energy Policy in collaboration with the World Bank; establishment of an ecological fund to address soil erosion, desertification, and general environmental issues; and the maintenance of biological parks to protect fauna and flora.

Core environmental issues

The majority of land in rural Nigeria is used for agriculture, and most people depend on the environment for their livelihoods. Agriculture accounts for about 40 per cent of GDP and generates about 90 per cent of all agriculture-related exports in terms of revenue. The industrial, oil-exploration, and mining sectors also contribute substantially to revenue, but, collectively, all these sectors impact on the environment, and this tends to perpetuate poverty in the country. It is for this reason that this section examines the core environmental issues such as land ownership, pollution, and other environmental problems.

Agriculture and environment

It has been observed that in Nigeria agriculture is a major employer of the active labour force, and a great contributor to Gross Domestic Product, which has long been neglected. In addition, it has also been observed that some of the practices used, such as the slash-and-burn system, artificial irrigation of large tracts of land, and use of heavy machinery such as tractors, have contributed to environmental degradation. It is because of this that some critical environmental problems are discussed below.

Soil erosion

Clearing of forests for agricultural purposes and the excessive application of fertilisers have exposed soil to the intense tropical sun and resulted in erosion. In 1997, the government estimated that more than 90 per cent of the land

area was suffering from sheet, rill, and gully erosion.²⁶⁵ Areas that are seriously affected include Nanka, Agulu, Oko in Anambra State, Okigwe in Imo State, and parts of Abia and Enugu States. Along the coast, 50 erosion sites have been identified, covering about 835 sq km.²⁶⁶ The major areas affected are Victoria beach, Awoye/Molume, Encravos/Ugborodo, Forcados, Brass, Bonny, Ibeno-Eket, and Ikot-Abasi.

Drought and desertification

The Committee that drafted the Vision 2010 policy document observed that Nigeria is presently losing about 351,000 sq km of its landmass to the desert.²⁶⁷ The worst-affected areas are Borno, Katsina, Sokoto, and Jigawa States. It has been argued that the causes are over-grazing, over-cultivation, and deforestation.

Ecological imbalances

Ecological imbalances have been created as a result of intensive hunting, the slash-and-burn method of cultivation, and the felling of trees for fuel wood, uncontrolled logging, and other purposes. As a consequence, the biological endowments of Nigeria are under threat. For instance, many wildlife and plant species are severely depleted, while others are already extinct, due to the destruction of their habitats. In the coastal areas, the marine environment is equally under threat, owing to the introduction of exotic species of plants and the destruction of mangrove communities which shelter diverse communities of marine life.

Urbanisation and environment

The causes of urbanisation have been well documented over the period; the major ones identified are out-migration from rural areas to urban centres, in response to the lack of paid work and social services in rural areas.²⁶⁸ The 1991 census estimated that about 36 per cent of the population lived in urban areas, a figure which is projected to rise to 70 per cent by 2020 if the rate of rural-urban drift remains unchecked.

An increase in urban population puts pressure on existing resources such as land, water, and energy; it generates more waste, thus creating disposal problems. Other damaging effects include increased use of domestic and industrial chemicals, the spread of unplanned and blighted settlements, pollution of air and water, and the degradation of land.

Policy assessment

Nigeria does have policies on environmental management. On paper they seem impressive. In reality, the implementation leaves much to be desired.

Environmental Impact Assessment Act

The Environmental Impact Assessment Act is a case in point. It has been argued²⁶⁹ that the Act does not encourage the participation of people whose lives are likely to be affected by a project; rather, it encourages the collection and documentation of technical information which is confusing and unintelligible to a majority of people. All too often, the provisions enshrined in the law are not enforced: multinational corporations seem able to evade them.

1999 Environmental Policy

A review of the 1999 policy makes the following comment: 'the policy and laudable institutional arrangements have not yielded the desired results'.²⁷⁰ This failure is ascribed to weak enforcement of the law; inadequate manpower in the area of integrated environment management; insufficient political will; inadequate and mismanaged funding; a low degree of public awareness of environmental issues; and a top-down approach to the planning and implementation of environmental programmes.

The Land Use Act (1978)

Land ownership in Nigeria is subject to a range of diverse cultural and traditional practices and customs. Land can be classified according to the following broad categories:

- **Community land**, or land commonly referred to as ancestral land, is owned by all the people.
- **Communal land** consists mostly of under-developed forests and is owned by nobody. Those who clear it first claim the ownership.
- **Clan or family land** is owned by clans and families, as the name suggests.
- **Institutional land**: land allocated to traditional institutions such as traditional authorities and chiefs.
- **Individual land**: land acquired by an individual, which may be inherited by the immediate family, depending on customary practices.

Under the traditional system of ownership, people were guaranteed land for all necessary purposes. However, how this stable system has been distorted by the introduction of legal instruments within the body polity of the modern nation-state.

Under the Land Use Act, the ownership of land is vested in the Federal Government, but provisions in the Act make it possible for State and Local Governments to hold the land in their respective areas in trust. The relevant portion of the Act reads:

All land in the territory of each State (except land vested in the Federal Government or its Agencies) is vested in the Governor of the State, who holds such land in trust for the people and would henceforth be responsible for the allocation of land in all urban areas to individuals resident in the State and to organisations for residential, agricultural, commercial and other purposes while similar powers with respect to non-urban areas are conferred on Local Governments.

The rationale for the Act was that bitter disputes over land were resulting in loss of life and limb; moreover, that the management and ownership of land needed to be streamlined and simplified; and furthermore that citizens, irrespective of their social status, need support to realise their aspirations of owning a place where they and their family can lead a secure and peaceful life.

This Act is further defended in the National Housing Policy framework, which states that the Act protects and preserves the rights of Nigerians to hold, use, and enjoy land; it reforms and harmonises the various land-tenure systems in the country.

Critics of the Land Use Act have pointed out that the interests of individuals and communities have been reduced to mere rights of occupancy, which can be revoked by the appropriate authorities on certain conditions such as 'overriding public interest' (way-leaves, prospecting for oil, mining activities, or oil pipelines). Moreover, the law is ambiguous in certain respects and makes interpretation difficult. The Act grants excessive powers to the Federal and State Governments, which has a dramatic impact on land rights. It does not provide adequate security against forced evictions, harassment, and threats. Finally, the recognition of the Act under the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution debars any resort to the courts to seek redress.

Effects of the Land Use Act on sustainable development

According to its critics, the Act denies poor people access to and ownership of land for farming, housing, and other purposes. Thus it disempowers them and fails to promote sustainable livelihoods.²⁷¹ In Ngor Okpala in Imo State, arable land belonging to local communities was taken without negotiations or consultations. This has been cited as a typical example of the way that the Act deprives poor people of security to land and sources of livelihood.

In situations where the people face the threat of eviction, community mobilisation for sustainable development is almost impossible, because the communal spirit that is characteristic of most people is lost. An example is an eviction order issued by the Lagos State Government, instructing residents of Ajegunle to leave their present settlement. The eviction order denies the people their fundamental human rights, as enshrined in the 1999 Constitution and other provisions under Section 16 (2) (d).²⁷²

Case study: environmental impact of the oil industry in the Delta Region

The Delta Region is suffering large-scale environmental abuse and human-rights violations because of its rich oil resources. A study of the situation gives a vivid picture of how environmental degradation can damage people's livelihoods. This case study is based on unpublished research conducted by Frank Kirwan in 1999 (several years after the EIA Act was passed).²⁷³ It begins with an analysis of the unique, delicately balanced ecosystem of the Niger Delta, where Ogoni is located. This leads to an outline of the oil-production process and its effects on the environment, while drawing on comparative analysis from other parts of the continent as well as Europe. The study ends with a participatory assessment of the impact of the oil industry on women's lives. The study relied on both secondary and primary sources of data in its assessment of the adverse effects of the oil industry. The findings and analysis are summarised below.

Expropriation of the Ogoni economy

Oil was first discovered in Ogoni in 1958. Its intensive and long-scale extraction has been dominated by foreign companies ever since then.

Apart from oil, Ogoni is the site of other industrial activities such as refineries, a fertiliser plant, an ocean port, and other oil-servicing companies. The irony of the situation is that in spite of all this, unemployment is very high. In particular, 'the oil industry does not feature as a significant resource for Ogoni women' (Kirwan 1999, page 17).

Oil, environment, and sustainable livelihoods

In assessing the environmental damage to the livelihoods of the people, the study revealed the following major problems.

- **Oil spills:** every year approximately 2300 cubic metres of oil are spilled in 300 or so separate incidents. (The estimate of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company is 300 cubic metres spilt annually.)
- **Gas flaring:** this produces soot, which is deposited on land and buildings, damaging the vegetation and polluting the atmosphere.
- **Appropriation of land:** pipelines spanning several kilometres are laid across land otherwise used for agriculture. Vegetation is destroyed to create access routes for equipment. People and the soil are exposed to shocks from explosives, which often destabilise the soil.
- **Contamination of water sources used mainly for drinking and washing:** as reported by Human Rights Watch and quoted by the researcher, samples of water taken from Ogoni and tested in the USA revealed 18 parts per million of hydrocarbons in the water from Luwaini, an area where oil production had ceased for four years. This level of hydrocarbons was found to be 360 times the approved limit for drinking water.
- **Damage to food supplies:** oil spills spurt over large areas, destroying crops, economic trees, the ecosystem, and fishing areas.
- **Ill health:** the spills pollute land, water, and air, thus affecting the physical health (as well as the economic well-being) of local communities.
- **Reduced incomes:** disruption to agriculture means loss of income for farmers, inability to pay school and hospital fees, inability to procure fertilisers, and loss of investment in other income-generating areas.

Social and political impact of the oil industry

The oil industry has created class-based social divisions in the production areas, where high disparities in income are observed between oil workers and civil and public servants. Due to these distortions, provision of services such as housing has been biased towards the high-income earners, thus denying public servants and the poor the opportunity to rent decent houses. Associated with this is the lack of basic social amenities in most rural communities, and in some parts of the urban areas. The high level of deprivation creates frustration and discontent among the populace. This accounts for campaigns in the Delta for the right of the local communities to control their own natural resources.²⁷⁴

Another source described local conditions as follows: 'During our research in various parts of the Delta, we found villages with no primary schools, thousands of youth who had no hope of finding employment and no skills to create employment for themselves, grossly inadequate infrastructure in terms of electricity, water, roads, schools, and health facilities.' Looking at the conflict situation in the area, this source continues: 'while it is Government's responsibility to provide these facilities, the oil and gas companies are often targeted because Government *appears too distant to touch*' (emphasis added by consultants).

Land, environmental degradation, and poverty

Gender and traditional systems of land ownership

In most communities in Nigeria, women cannot legally own land and are denied inheritance rights. Men have control over land and take all the decisions about its use and development. The role of women is reduced to providing labour on the farms, in addition to their domestic responsibilities. This creates an unequal relationship between men and women and further perpetuates the poverty of women. Women's lack of access to land, and the impact of this fact on the lives of themselves and their children, is a major concern for development organisations.

Poverty and environmental degradation

The review process has identified a relationship between agricultural practices, environmental degradation, and poverty. For example, drought and desertification bring about severe disruption

to the socio-economic development of the affected areas. Persistent droughts may result in failure of crops and death of livestock, eventually leading to famine.²⁷⁵ Tree-felling allows run-off rainfall to remove the solid surface layers of soil, thereby resulting in soil degradation and impoverishment, loss of farmlands, and the pollution of available sources of drinking water.²⁷⁶ Coastal erosion poses great threats to coastal communities and their economic activities. The ultimate effect is poor yields, and thus food insecurity, low incomes, and communities pushed to the brink of poverty. Analysts have classified this kind of poverty as both physiological deprivation and income poverty.²⁷⁷

Urbanisation and environmental poverty

The literature reviewed indicates that rapid urbanisation has resulted in a dramatic decline in standards of living in towns, where residents in overcrowded conditions frequently fall sick and cannot work to earn the incomes required to ensure a decent living.²⁷⁸

Government has been unable to manage the situation, for a number of reasons.²⁷⁹ The key ones are the lack of co-ordination, and overlapping roles and responsibilities, within the various parastatals charged with responsibility for managing the urban environment. These agencies are inadequately funded by the government, thus making it difficult for them to fulfil the roles expected of them. Waste management is a particularly pressing problem, in that the technology used is inappropriate, due to lack of resources and technical/managerial capabilities.

Problems of environmental management

Limitations of the legal framework

The Constitution, despite its references to fundamental rights and protection of the citizenry, is almost silent on issues related to environmental rights, except under the Directive Principles of State Policy.²⁸⁰ However, as we have seen, Acts intended to protect the environment are inconsistent with the spirit of the Constitution, as they fail to guarantee the right to security of tenure and the right to a healthy environment.

Institutional bottlenecks and corruption

Another source, referring to the multiplicity of legislation which provides rules and regulations for the oil industry, concludes thus: '... they (laws) have largely been kept in breach than in observance. Even institutions created by law to monitor the industry's compliance with environmental standards ... have failed woefully to enforce the rules.'²⁸¹

Inadequacy of environmental impact assessments

It has been pointed out that by law all major development projects are required to undertake environmental impact assessments; but, as we have seen, these are not enforced. In situations where the assessments have been done, they are not always thorough.

Creating a balance: a way forward

The people of Nigeria depend on the environment for their livelihoods. The sustainability of their livelihoods depends on measures to replenish natural resources so that they can continue to provide the people with their source of livelihood. Achieving this requires political commitment by the leadership, who must recognise that failure to protect the environment means failure to meet the aspirations of the people. The political, social, and economic consequences of failure will be too costly for the nation.²⁸⁴ For this reason, critics have urged the government to address the following problems in particular.

- The Land Use Act discriminates against poor people and does not provide the security of land tenure on which their livelihood depends. It must therefore be reviewed.²⁸⁵ This same law entrusts the government with responsibility for controlling the land on behalf of the people. The challenge is how to find ways of ensuring that land can be appropriated in the public interest without leaving the people impoverished.
- The government owns majority shares in most of the oil and gas companies (55 per cent to 60 per cent). Creating a balance between the need for revenue and the need to ensure equity in the distribution of national resources is a challenge that has to be managed in such a way that it does not create tension and mistrust and therefore a threat to democracy.
- The Environmental Impact Assessment Act was intended not only to ensure that projects, irrespective of type, are implemented within laid-down norms and procedures, but also to put in place mechanisms for ensuring a sustainable environment. Non-compliance with the law as documented is incompatible with the need to protect the environment in the public interest. The government has the arduous task of enforcing the law as well as maintaining its interest as a major investor, while dealing with the problem of corruption among some of those who are responsible for enforcing the laws.
- The rapidly increasing population, the urban pull-effect on young people, and unintended environmental degradation in the urban areas all interact to create poverty in the towns and cities. The challenge is to implement a policy mix that will share resources fairly between the urban and rural areas, and ensure that exploitation of natural resources accommodates the aspirations and needs of the deprived people of the country.

Conclusion

The above analysis has tried to establish that Nigeria's degraded environment is a result of failure to implement appropriate policies, of ineffective institutional arrangements for environmental management, over-exploitation of natural resources and the forest, and imbalances in the distribution of social services, among others factors. Poor communities pay the price of this failure, in terms of insecure access to land, low agricultural output, low incomes, and poor health.

All these indicators of poverty are visible and pervasive in both rural and urban areas. Addressing the situation requires a holistic approach which takes into consideration the political, economic, and social dimensions of livelihoods in the formulation of policies, as required by Agenda 21 of the Earth Summit.

8 Women and poverty in Nigeria

*The social dimension of poverty is largely a gender issue, since the greatest weight of poverty is borne by women household heads and children from poor homes.*²⁸⁶

Introduction

Women constitute more than half of the world's population and more than 70 per cent of the world's poor.²⁸⁷ Many experience a life that is a complex web of multi-roles and multi-tasks, which requires the average woman to conduct 'different roles at different times in a bid to fulfil her family's needs'.²⁸⁸ These roles have been theoretically characterised as reproductive, productive, and community roles.

Given the harsh realities of increasing poverty in the country, Nigerian women experience poverty in the following ways: economically through deprivation; politically through marginalisation; socially through discrimination; culturally through ruthlessness; and ecologically through vulnerability.²⁸⁹ For the women and children of Nigeria, these experiences are part of their daily lives – and throughout their lives.

The role of women in Nigerian society is changing, but not always to their advantage. They generally work much longer hours than men do. They provide an estimated 60–80 per cent of the labour in agriculture through the production, processing, and marketing of food. They assist on family farms and are farmers in their own right.²⁹⁰ They are responsible for fetching water and fuel wood and act as 'the most important health worker for [their] children'.²⁹¹ So, Nigerian women are in an important position to contribute to food security, nutrition, and the overall health status of the family and in turn of the community.

Yet despite the fact that women in Nigeria produce most of the nation's food and are responsible for the survival of their family, they are inadequately recognised or rewarded for their efforts at any level. They experience social exclusion and violations of their human, civil, legal, and reproductive rights. In terms of their productive role, women suffer discrimination and marginalisation through the denial of rights to land ownership and access to credit

facilities and inputs. They are isolated and restricted at the community level through harmful cultural, traditional, and religious practices and are restricted and further marginalised in their reproductive role.

In May 2002, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), in a joint venture with UNICEF, published the findings of an analysis of the situation of women and children in Nigeria. *Children's and Women's Rights in Nigeria: A Wake-up Call* provides a comprehensive assessment of the distressing burdens that poverty is imposing on Nigerian women and children. The publication recognises the legal, regulatory, traditional, and cultural barriers that constrain Nigeria's women and children, forcing them to remain seriously disadvantaged in all spheres. The assessment shows that women and children in Nigeria are among the poorest in sub-Saharan Africa and the developing world.

This chapter assesses gender-related inequality in Nigeria in terms of the violation of women's rights, which excludes them from full participation as active citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It shows how the social, political, and economic status of women is affected by the structural and repeated denial of their productive, reproductive, and communal rights.

History of Nigerian women's struggle for equality

In 1929, the struggle for Nigerian women's independence began in the south, where women organised themselves to address the socio-economic policies of the colonial administration which were adversely affecting their quality of life. In the east, this translated into the 'Egba and Aba women's riots'.²⁹² In 1947 the National Women's Union was organised under the leadership of Mrs Ransome-Kuti; in 1953 it became the Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies (FNWS). The FNWS demanded 'political participation and direct representation'²⁹³ in all legislative houses, the allocation of one third of the seats to women, universal suffrage, and

participation at the development of new legislation. Women in the south were enfranchised at independence, whereas women in the north had to wait until 1979. The era of military rule hampered any progress by Nigerian women and infected the wider Nigerian society through the imposition of patriarchal norms. During General Obasanjo's transition programme, women were becoming active in political parties, albeit under 'women's wings'.²⁹⁴ There were no women on the Constitution Drafting Committee in 1975 and there was no examination of women's needs or rights. Four women at the Constituent Assembly did, however, succeed in outlawing sexual discrimination in Customary and Islamic law.

After the *coup d'état* in 1983, the situation of Nigerian women under the new military regime worsened, as they were primarily held accountable for 'indiscipline', 'loose morals', and 'delinquency'.²⁹⁵ The change of military leadership in 1985 coincided with the UN Decade for Women and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Under the leadership of General Sani Abacha, the National Women's Commission was set up (later upgraded to the Ministry for Women's Affairs and Social Development) and headed by the wife of the President. The Family Support Programme (FSP) and Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) were introduced, and the National Policy on Women was developed at the time of the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. Yet the macro-economic reforms under the Structural Adjustment Programmes and the prevalence of human-rights abuses under the regime further disempowered and marginalised women and plunged them deeper into poverty.

UN Decade for Women

The United Nations Decade for Women and Development took place between 1975 and 1985. In 1985 the Third UN Convention on Women was held in Nairobi; it considered future action to advance the role and status of women, and targeted the year 2000 as a deadline for achievement. The conference identified general areas of concern and targets in relation to the global development of women, particularly in the following areas:²⁹⁶ poverty; education; economic structures and policies; effects of conflicts; health care; violence against women; power sharing; human rights; women and the environment; political advancement of women; and survival of the girl-child.

Significantly, the conference was held in Africa and attended by representatives from all over the continent, including Nigeria, thus providing an opportunity to assess and address for the first time some of the continent-specific needs of African women. A decade later the Fourth Conference on women, held in Beijing, essentially arrived at the same concerns, indicating that little had changed in the intervening ten years.

CEDAW

One important and significant international response to the UN Decade for Women was the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The convention identifies women's rights as human rights and demands their inclusion in all spheres. Article 1 of CEDAW calls on governments to abolish

any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

(UNSG, UNIFEM)

Nigeria ratified CEDAW in 1985; but, while the provisions of the treaty enjoy international law, they are not yet part of Nigeria's domestic legal framework. Although the Convention is not legally enforceable in domestic legislature, by the nature of the ratification Nigeria has accepted the obligation to be assessed in terms of its respect for the rights of women and also in terms of its progress since ratification.²⁹⁷

National policy on women

In response to UN initiatives, Nigeria formulated a National Policy on Women, which the new democratic administration has approved. The policy is an attempt to incorporate women fully into national development as 'equal partners, decision-makers and beneficiaries'²⁹⁸ of Nigeria, through the removal of gender-based inequalities. The policy aspires to the inclusion of women in all spheres of national life, including education, science and technology, health care, employment, agriculture, industry, environment, legal justice, social services, and the media. It aspires to eliminate the negative aspects of Nigerian culture which serve only to harm women, and it

aspires to challenge the patriarchal *status quo*. Tangible evidence of any improvement in the status of women is slow to appear, and few would argue that the development of women in Nigeria—in particular the status of rural women—has advanced. Any improvement in the lives of women is ‘more apparent than real’.²⁹⁹

Women and the Constitution

Another challenge to Nigeria’s progress in terms of CEDAW is Article 2 of the Convention, which recommends the embodiment of these rights of equality within the nation’s constitution. In 1999 an Inter-Party Technical Committee was set up to review the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Currently, it does not identify the fundamental human rights of women as members of the community. Its language and content are insensitive to gender, and it does not acknowledge the needs and rights of Nigerian women. There is a provision within the Constitution which forbids discrimination on the grounds of gender; and employment rights, particularly those of pregnant women in work, are protected under the Labour Act. However, formal paid employment is primarily inaccessible to women, given their reproductive obligations, low levels of literacy, and low social status. Also, the legislation is rarely enforced.

The Constitution defines anyone over 18 years of age as an adult. However, in terms of marriage, section 29 (4)(b) of the Constitution says, ‘any woman who is married shall be deemed to be of full age’.³⁰⁰ Since there is no legal minimum age of marriage in Nigeria, a 10-year-old child could be considered an adult if she is married. This not only directly targets women and discriminates against them, but has consequences for their physical development. The present democratic government is considering the gender-related aspects of the Constitution in the light of Article 18(3) of the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights,³⁰¹ and the National Council of Women’s Societies is trying to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 years.

Women in government

The Nigerian women’s struggle in the early years has not translated into a corresponding political presence in today’s democratic arena. The marginalisation of women is especially apparent in public and political spheres. According to the Ministry of Women’s Affairs,

68 per cent of voters are women;³⁰² yet, under the current democratic administration, statistics confirm that Nigerian women are under-represented at prominent government levels. There are just three women in the Senate, out of 109 members. Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 73 of the 784 women are employed as diplomats; the remainder are in low-level, low-paid positions. Nine elected Local Government Chairpersons are women, out of a total of 774. Of the 995 members of State Houses of Assembly, 12 are women. There are 12 women in the House of Representatives, and no female State governors.³⁰³

Employment rights

Nigerian women are under-represented in the paid workforce. Findings from UNIFEM 2000 revealed that in the formal sector, women constitute 30 per cent of professional posts, 17 per cent of administrative/managerial positions, and 30 per cent of clerical positions; 17 per cent are employed in ‘other’ categories.³⁰⁴ Women are disproportionately concentrated in low-paid jobs, particularly in agriculture and the informal sector. The Federal Office of Statistics has noted that 48 per cent of women are engaged in agricultural work, and 38 per cent are involved in petty trading at markets, although it is common knowledge that most rural women conduct both roles. Women and young girls in Nigeria are burdened with an unfair workload inside and outside the home. Data suggest that 33 per cent of women work five or more days per week for very long hours to supplement the family income. In rural areas, aside from their reproductive and house-keeping roles, women must fetch water and firewood, in addition to conducting much of the agricultural work in the fields such as planting, hoeing and weeding, harvesting, and transporting and storage of crops.³⁰⁵ Research has revealed that 41 per cent of working mothers have to tend to their children while at work. Women in urban areas have little support from their extended family or community and so are forced to take their young children with them to work. Or the infants are left with older female siblings while their mothers are at work, which prevents the older girls from attending school, and partly explains the high levels of illiteracy among young girls.³⁰⁶

Land and credit

Men in Nigeria have much greater control over resources than women do. In Africa, women produce 80 per cent of the food for the continent, yet they receive less than 10 per cent of the earnings or credit available to small farmers. There is a scarcity of documentation about women's role in relation to land ownership and farming in Nigeria, but statistics on land registration show that 90 per cent of all land in the country is registered in men's names. Nigerian women have always worked on farms, yet have never been allowed to own any land.³⁰⁷ Their role is seen as solely domestic, and as such they are perceived as not warranting access to land. Lack of capital resources prohibits their access to credit and other forms of finance. Although this is increasingly being experienced by all rural poor people, the effects on women are compounded by the continued denial of their rights and the lack of recognition of their important role in the agricultural labour force. This has served to contribute to what is being termed as the 'feminisation' of poverty.

Customary Law in Nigeria assists this process by further marginalising women. Every Nigerian citizen has a constitutional right to own property. Yet in some parts of the country women have absolutely no right to property or land, by virtue of being female. The statutory 'Married Women's Property Act' allows a woman various rights to own and dispose of land and property and to a share of her husband's property on death or divorce. However, she must produce documentary evidence of her contribution throughout the marriage, and she needs to have financial resources before seeking justice through the courts. Normally customary law prevails, and the woman is left with virtually nothing on the death of her spouse, or on divorce. Customs may vary according to region and ethnic group. For example, under Islamic law, the woman has a right to her husband's property – except on divorce, when she loses all rights. Among the Yoruba, it is the custom for daughters to have a right to a share in the father's land and property. However, a negative outcome for divorced wives or widows is almost guaranteed.

There have been some government and community initiatives to assist women in obtaining *micro-finance and credit*, in order to form co-operatives and self-help organisations. But, in this as in other spheres of life, cultural barriers and the high level of illiteracy among females throughout the country raise the odds against such ventures.

Community rights

Many women are uninformed and excluded from political developments, at both the national and local community levels. The patriarchal environment that prevails in Nigerian society reinforces the male claim to leadership of the community, which is seen as a divine right 'that cannot be questioned or modified'.³⁰⁸ This assumption reinforces the common notion that women are inferior and it perpetuates the oppression and subjugation experienced by women in many Nigerian communities.³⁰⁹

According to a consultative study conducted for the World Bank Development Report, experiences of poverty in Nigeria are 'gendered'.³¹⁰ Women's feelings of isolation at the personal and community levels mean that they experience poverty differently from men. Researchers found that women are excluded at all levels of society, including community events, which compounds their inability to access information and hampers their right to belong to the community or obtain any government information or benefits, should they be made available; and thus their poverty is perpetuated.³¹¹

Marriage rights

Marriage is an important cultural, traditional, and religious event in Nigerian society, particularly for women and young girls. Statistics in an NDHS survey suggest that 70 per cent of women are married or living with a partner. Only 2.2 per cent of marriages end in divorce or separation, and only 1.6 per cent of widows do not re-marry.³¹² Statistics from the Central Bank of Nigeria suggest higher figures, reporting that 86.6 per cent are married, while 3.7 per cent are widowed and 5.2 per cent are divorced or separated.³¹³

Widowhood and divorce

Article 19 of CEDAW states that a woman has a right to equality in a marriage, and on its dissolution, with respect to 'ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property'.³¹⁴ But in Nigeria, the three-tier civil law system—statutory, religious, and customary—complicates the enforcement of any inheritance rights that women may have. Customary law would normally prevail, leaving the woman with little or no inheritance. Given the consequences for divorced or widowed women, many tend to re-marry quickly after divorce or

bereavement. Under customary law, a woman has no right to a share in her marriage property, and in some cases the husband can demand a return of the dowry paid to the parents. More importantly, customary law favours giving custody of the children to the father rather than to the mother. The interests and welfare of the child are incorporated into statute, but rarely do they over-ride customary and religious law. Under Islamic law, the children are afforded the right to be with their mother, but in practice this appears not to be the case, owing to various social pressures, including women's lack of knowledge of statute law, and therefore their ignorance of their rights.

A bereaved wife is left without inheritance and may be forced to endure 'widowhood rites' in order to satisfy the community that she is innocent of her husband's death. Islamic law makes provisions for a widow's right of inheritance, yet customary law over-rides this, and widows are normally left with nothing. Nigerian traditional culture has no concept of co-ownership of property. Often the women themselves are viewed as marriage 'property'.³¹⁵ Normal practice entitles male relatives of a deceased husband to rights of all assets from the marriage. As a form of social security, these assets included the widow of the deceased, for whom a male relative of the late husband had a traditional obligation. This tradition continues today, although the notion of obligation has diminished. The practice of 'wife inheritance' could have implications for the spread of HIV in circumstances where the husband died from HIV/AIDS-related symptoms.

In addition to the possible fates of disinheritance, abandonment, or being 'inherited' by an in-law, the widow is subjected to various extraordinarily abusive rites of widowhood. There is no uniformity in these rites, which predominate in the rural areas throughout the country – although they sometimes persist also in the urban areas.³¹⁶ Such practices are harmful to a widow's health, because many of the rituals involve insanitary conditions and requirements, and further impoverish her as she is disabled from earning a living, due to her enforced confinement and isolation.

Childhood marriage

Harmful cultural practices and taboos have served only to violate and further marginalise women. A UNICEF/FGN assessment reports that 'culturally-based limitations on the exercise of women's reproductive rights are among the key factors underlying the high levels of maternal,

infant and under-five mortality'.³¹⁷ In a patriarchal society such as Nigeria, women have few legal, economic, or social rights – and this includes rights over their own bodies. This is particularly evident in the north, where marriage for very young girls is usually arranged by parents. Obedience is demanded within a marriage, and chastisement is encouraged. This is legally enforced under Sharia law and is in direct violation of Article 16 of CEDAW, which Nigeria has ratified.

Nigerian tradition places a high cultural premium on children, which contributes to the high birth rate in the country. In Nigeria it is common practice for parents to arrange the marriage of their young daughters, particularly to older men. In the north, 26.5 per cent of marriages are characterised by an age difference of 15 years or more between husband and wife.³¹⁸ Statistics show that 24.4 per cent of girls between the ages of 15 and 19 are married, while the figure for boys of the same age is just 2.2 per cent. The figures for ages 20–24 show that 57.6 per cent of women are married, while only 14.2 per cent of men in the same age-group are married. Men marry later than women: their median age at first marriage is 26 years, compared with 18 years for women.³¹⁹

Although Nigeria has ratified CEDAW, there is still no legal minimum age for consent to marriage. In Nigeria the age of marriage and of sexual activity is largely culturally determined. In the northern states, the average age is 15 years, whereas in the south it is 18 and 20 years. Section 18 of the Marriage Act at the federal level recognises a person under 21 years of age as a minor, but allows minors to marry with parental consent. In some eastern states, the minimum age of marriage is stipulated under the 1956 Age of Marriage Law, in accordance with customary law.

Young girls are often taken out of school to satisfy the cultural norms of childhood marriage. An NDHS survey found that 19 per cent of girls cited marriage as a reason for leaving school.³²⁰ In the north, 55 per cent of girls aged between 15 and 19 were pregnant or already mothers. Teenage marriage is seen as a means of maintaining chastity. Whereas the median age of marriage for the nation is 18.3 years, in the North East it is 15.1 years, and in the North West it is 14.7 years. There have been reports in various areas of the north of girls as young as 13.6 years being married. In total, 78 per cent of girls were married before they were 15 years old. Not only does the practice of early marriage

have an implication for illiteracy, but also it raises serious concerns about young women's physical, mental, and emotional health. The National Policy on Women, adopted in July 2000, calls for action to 'discourage or forbid the withdrawal of girls under eighteen from schools for marriage through legal sanctions'.³²¹

Childhood marriage has many implications – and not least the fact that it robs girls of power over their own bodies and limits their freedom to make decisions about their own reproductive health. Early childbearing has 'negative demographic, socioeconomic and sociocultural consequences'.³²² It compounds the general inability of girls and women to claim their constitutional and universal right to an education. More severe are the harmful effects of child pregnancy on the health of the mother. Especially in the north of Nigeria, early pregnancy accounts for high incidences of maternal mortality and for internal conditions such as Visico Vaginal Fistula (VVF), which result in incontinence of the bladder and bowel. VVF occurs because the pelvic bones have had insufficient time to develop to cope with child-birth. Corrective operations often require the consent of the spouse, and more often than not the sufferers are abandoned or divorced by their husbands and ostracised by their communities. Some 80–90 per cent of affected women are divorced by their husbands as a result.³²³ Some post-natal traditional practices, conducted mainly in the north of Nigeria, expose women to further dangers, such as the practice among Hausa women of ritual body heating and the ingestion of salt-rich food for 40 days after giving birth.

Cultural and ritual practices

Purdah

The Islamic custom of *purdah* – the seclusion of women from the sight of men – is practised in Nigeria. *Purdah* generally applies to married women and girls who have reached puberty, although the practice varies from country to country and region to region.³²⁴ *Purdah* takes various forms, but in essence it prohibits women from interaction with strangers inside and outside the home. Although evidence suggests that the practice in its most fundamental form has declined, it nonetheless exists and is being reintroduced under Sharia law in various States in the north. The practice deprives women of their rights to freedom of movement and associ-

ation, and their access to education and other social services; it impedes their contribution to family income and their ability to care for their families; it excludes them from participation in the wider society, thus adding to their poverty.³²⁵

Female genital mutilation

Attracting much international concern is the practice of female circumcision, or female genital mutilation (FGM), which is reportedly prevalent in 28 African countries. While the practice is universal in Somalia and Djibouti, many young women and children in Nigeria are also subjected to it. National data on the extent of the practice in Nigeria are scarce, although for the first time the topic was included in the 1999 NDHS. The UNICEF/FGN situation assessment reported that, given the size of the Nigerian population, Nigerian women constitute one quarter of the 115–130 million circumcised women throughout the world – the highest number of cases in absolute terms in the whole world.

In national terms, 40 per cent of women in Nigeria experience FGM, although there are regional variations. It is practised mainly in the south: 77 per cent of women in the South South, 85 per cent in the South East, and 65 per cent in the South West. The procedure is not so common in the north of the country, where the proportions of the female population who undergo it are 25 per cent in the North West, 18 per cent in the Middle West, and 4 per cent in the North East. But infibulation – the most extreme form of mutilation—is conducted in the north, which accounts for 10 per cent of all FGM practised in Nigeria.³²⁶ The continued practice has been associated with educated women, although three-quarters of women educated to the tertiary level advocate its abolition.³²⁷ The practice is not a religious rite, but rather a traditional cultural practice. Some research indicates a decline in FGM, although two major studies in the area have produced markedly different results.³²⁸

The procedure is performed predominantly on girls under 5 years of age, of whom more than 57 per cent were circumcised before they were one year old. Some women experience the procedure in adolescence or as a marriage ritual. Surveys of local attitudes reveal that the procedure is valued in terms of maintenance of cultural and traditional practices (50 per cent of respondents agreed with this proposition); it is also regarded as important because it is thought

to ensure better marriage prospects. Ironically, in view of the attendant risks to health, there is a common belief that infibulation is justified by considerations of sexual hygiene and reproductive health. FGM is not performed free of charge, which means that it is a source of income for one household and a financial burden on another.

Although the practice is globally and nationally prohibited, there is no legislation for its effective discontinuation in Nigeria. Recently, State laws banning FGM have been introduced in Cross River, Delta, Edo and Ogun, with similar laws under consideration in Adwa-Ibom and Bayelsa.³²⁹ The National Policy on Women recognises the harmful effects of FGM and other such practices and recommends that the 'government should legislate the mandatory provision of maternal health services ... to all women to protect them from such disabilities as Visico Vaginal Fistula (VVF), FGM and other harmful traditional practices'.³³⁰

Whatever the reasons for it, FGM is a symbol of male patriarchy. It subdues female sexuality, and it is a gross infringement of human rights. It is a violation of international conventions on women and children to which Nigeria is a signatory. It poses serious and often fatal risks to women's health. In today's climate it compromises the health of others through the possible spread of HIV/AIDS, owing to the insanitary conditions of the procedure.

It is a financial burden on households. It perpetuates women's poverty by reinforcing their inferior status.

Violence

The Fourth Conference on Women in Beijing defined violence as involving 'physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women' at any level, including in the home.³³¹ The extent of violence and the violation of human rights committed against women in Nigeria is staggering. The beating of women in Nigeria is culturally sanctioned and ignored by law-enforcers.³³² Circumstantial evidence suggests that 'changing social conditions have led to an increase in domestic violence, including the loosening of traditional restrictions on the forms, intensity and extent of beating', leading to cases of uncontrolled battering.³³³ The erosion of extended family ties results in family members no longer being present to intervene in cases of extreme violence. This is particularly apparent in urban areas, where women are more isolated and have fewer support structures.

UNICEF suggests that the increase in violence could be linked to the increasing poverty facing many Nigerian families. Concerns over basic and material necessities for survival, tensions over women's changing societal role, the erosion of traditional support from extended family ties, and uncertainties about the future have led to 'an atmosphere of tension and general nervousness' that is conducive to physical violence. With women officers comprising just 5 per cent of the police force, and the reputed trivialising of 'domestic' offences by male officers, there is limited support for women under such circumstances. Also, women have little legal recourse in customary courts, which are almost exclusively staffed by men – who view members of their own sex as custodians of local tradition.³³⁴

The statute books continue to discriminate against women and tacitly support violence against them. For example, section 55(1)(d) of the Penal Code for the 19 States of northern Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, permits a man to beat his wife for the purpose of 'correcting her'. This is subject to 'any native law or custom in which such correction is recognised as lawful', and provided that the result does not amount to 'the infliction of grievous hurt'. Also included is the right of parents and teachers to beat children under the age of 18, and the beating of 'servants' by their masters. Although this excludes 17 southern States, portions of Part 5, chapter 5 of the penal code are 'interlaced with excuses or justifications for assault' which encourage domestic violence. Section 6 of the penal code sanctions marital rape by providing a husband with immunity in such cases. In Muslim personal law, which is adjudicated according to Islamic procedures, a woman's testimony is worth half that of a man's in civil cases – and nothing at all in criminal cases. This is further complicated through the extension of Sharia law into the criminal justice system in some northern States.³³⁵

Disability

In Nigeria, disability confers shame on a family. Women with disabilities are ridiculed and exploited and are often victims of social ostracism.³³⁶ They live on the margins of society, often ignored, neglected, and mistreated; targets for abuse and exploitation, they experience even lower levels of opportunities for education or employment than non-disabled women. The available statistics

show that only 37 per cent of females with a disability were literate, compared with 57 per cent of disabled males.³³⁷ Statistical information is scant and outdated, and it restricts the definitions of disability. Other than birth defects, which are sometimes caused by poor lifestyle and environment, or by malnutrition as children and adults, women and children in Nigeria are susceptible to disabilities as a direct response to accidents or their environment. In the oil-producing areas, women have suffered injuries from oil-pipeline explosions, from road accidents as a result of street vending or begging, from communal and military violence, which has particularly affected women in Nigeria over the decades, and from severe beatings inflicted by their spouses. Childhood marriage and pregnancy-related health complications, and FGM and its associated damage, can also result in disability. Disability often renders women incapable of providing for themselves and their families, a fact which dooms them to live in poverty.

Trafficking and child labour

Exploitation of children

The reality and prevalence of poverty, along with the persistence of harmful cultural traditions in Nigeria, have served to marginalise and exploit the most vulnerable. The breakdown of support from extended families has isolated many women, leaving them destitute and forced to seek out other methods of survival. Many children³³⁸ have taken to begging on the streets and have become victims of middlemen who exploit their positions for personal gain. The trafficking of young women and children, both within the continent and internationally, has been likened to the slavery of colonial times. The sale of Nigerian children to work in neighbouring countries is becoming increasingly prevalent. The Nigerian government has not yet ratified the International Labour Organisation conventions Number 138 and 182 of 1973 and 1999 respectively, on abolishing all forms of child labour. Neither are Nigerian children protected under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which Nigeria has ratified but not enacted. The Children and Young Person's Bill has been delayed by disputes over consistencies with religious and customary traditions – and so children in Nigeria are not yet afforded national protection.

The incidence of the trafficking of children between the ages of 7 and 16 is most acute in parts of Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Cross River, Imo, and

Rivers, with the main catchment area encompassing the western States of Ogun, Ondo, and Osun.³³⁹ Poverty is forcing parents to send their children out to work, often in hazardous and exploitative situations that are harmful to the children's health and survival. While many children work as domestic servants, in cottage industries, in markets, and in mechanical workshops, many more are visibly taking to the streets as hawkers and beggars. In the north this type of 'work' is mostly carried out by girls, compared with the situation in the south, where the majority of street workers are boys. Begging is most popular in the north, whereas in the south it is mostly mothers, or young children of disabled parents, who are seen begging in cities. Scavenging is also prevalent in Nigerian society among young children between the ages of 9 and 16 years. These young children originate from the poorest backgrounds. Many endure long hours and harsh conditions for little reward. Their education suffers, as does their health. Children working after dark experience assaults, and young girls suffer sexual harassment and exploitation. Children are increasingly being sought from rural families by commercially driven middlemen, who exploit parents under the guise of the traditional 'fostering' custom, only to lure their children into unsavoury trades.³⁴⁰

Trafficking of women to Europe

Notable in Nigeria is the lucrative trafficking of young women to work in the European sex industry, and the phenomenon of young women in Nigerian cities who seek quick money from prostitution before settling down to a 'normal' life. This state of affairs has compounded the effects and the spread of HIV/AIDS. The greatest numbers of trafficked 'women' are between 10 and 16 years old. They are transported overseas in conditions which are becoming ever harsher, given the tightening of European immigration legislation. Some do not complete the journey. Those who do survive endure horrific conditions in order to pay off unreasonably large 'debts', under the guise of travel reimbursements. Although there are inadequacies in statistics, police records of arrests and deportations show that Nigerian women constitute a significant proportion. The women are usually trafficked to European countries, including Italy, Belgium, The Netherlands, Germany, and Spain, and to African countries such as Libya, Morocco, and Kenya. Between March 1999 and December 2000, a total of 1181 trafficked women were deported back to Nigeria. An analysis of their

States of origin reveals that the majority, 62.6 per cent of deportees, were from Edo State, followed by 9.6 per cent from Imo, 8.3 per cent from Anambra, and 6.6 per cent from Delta. It is estimated that 90 per cent of all Nigerian prostitutes originate from Edo State; most of these are between 18 and 38 years of age.³⁴¹

The current administration is developing an Anti-Trafficking Bill, in partnership with the Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF), an NGO led by the President's wife. The proposed legislation is currently before the National Assembly. Also, the administration is collaborating with the UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Protocol at Palermo in Italy to combat human trafficking from Nigeria.

The right to education

*Literacy is the key to the ultimate development of women.*³⁴²

Chapter 3 of this report identified the nationally poor levels of literacy and in particular the under-representation and poor performance of women and girls, as measured by education statistics. Figures show that 58 per cent of teenage girls have had no education at all, compared with 21 per cent who have primary education, and 5 per cent with some secondary education.³⁴³

Education has been shown to have a positive impact on the health status of women and children and on the economic health of a country. Educated women usually marry and have their children later than uneducated women. They utilise health facilities and information that will improve the health status of their families. Studies have shown a link between education for women and reduced child and infant mortality.³⁴⁴ (This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.) However, the ability of women in Nigeria to claim their right to a full education is hampered by constraints within the education system, by the negative learning environment for young girls, and by patriarchal assumptions about the supreme importance of women's reproductive role.

Education has an impact on gender relations, on health, and on prospects of survival. The greater the level of education, the greater the

ability of women to contribute to their own well-being and that of their families. In Nigeria, girls are very commonly denied an education. In rural areas they must assist with household chores, and some are already mothers themselves. Others are denied an education because a boy's education is favoured over a girl's. Stereotyping is consistent throughout the curriculum, through the provision of classes in woodwork for boys and cookery for girls; this tendency is reinforced through the negative attitudes of teaching staff, usually males, towards female pupils. This extends to employment in education where, for example, only 22 per cent of managers are women, and only 10 per cent of university lecturers are women. Also, parents are increasingly refusing to send their daughters to school, because of the unpleasant physical conditions and facilities that are encountered there.³⁴⁵

Conclusion

*Ignorance begets poverty and poverty begets ignorance in a vicious cycle that results in and is further reinforced by ill-health, vulnerability and voicelessness.*³⁴⁶

It is an indisputable fact that women and children are the principal victims of poverty. Nigeria is by tradition a patriarchal society, in which women are discriminated against from infancy. The violation of their human rights continues throughout their short life-cycle. Men and women experience poverty differently and use diverse coping mechanisms, conditioned by their access to various support systems. Women traditionally have access to the family network, while men utilise public and community systems, from which women are excluded. Yet, as Nigerian society changes and as women increasingly migrate to urban areas, their extended family ties are loosened and they are left isolated, alone, and vulnerable.

The UN Nigeria Common Country Assessment has remarked that little regard is paid by policy makers to gender issues. The report states that 'females in Nigeria have [a] lower social status than their male counterpart'. Despite their crucial role in society, Nigerian women are 'vilified, dominated, discriminated against and even disinherited by their relatives'.³⁴⁷ In practical terms, this is reflected in adverse social and health statistics, revealed in maternal morbidity and mortality rates, and reflected also in their limited access to educational and employment opportunities.

Women in Nigeria continue to be categorised principally or exclusively as reproductive agents and carers; yet sometimes they are only children themselves. Their advancement, at both the personal and community levels, has been hampered by the reproductive role which society has traditionally assigned to them. Patriarchal traditions and religions in Nigeria support and encourage this inferior status. Yet many Nigerian women are heads of their households, and many supplement a large proportion of the family income through involvement in various informal-sector activities. Today, women head one in three households in Nigeria. Statistics show that 48 per cent of households that are headed by men are considered poor, whereas only 44.5 per cent of households headed by women are poor.³⁴⁸ This is so, despite the fact that women's access to education is severely limited.

Nigeria's new democratic government has taken positive steps towards raising the awareness of the situation of Nigeria's women and children. In a collaborative effort with UNICEF, a Situation Assessment Analysis for 2001 was undertaken, with the intention of supporting appropriate responsive strategies to be addressed in a FGN/UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation 2002–2007. Setting policies which are gender-sensitive and inclusive and empowering would improve the country's Human Development Index. Given that women constitute more than half the country's population, this would in turn have a positive impact on poverty alleviation.

*The alleviation of poverty...depends as much on the social uplift[ing] of women by, among other things, the redistribution of resources, as it does on national economic prosperity*³⁴⁹

9 Technology and poverty in Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria has been described as belonging to 'the category of countries that are non-industrialised and technologically totally dependent'.³⁵⁰ Technological development is directly related to the general level of development in a country. It has been observed that 'the countries of the Pacific Rim ... have been the most industrially and technologically successful'.³⁵¹ This success has been ascribed partly to heavy investment in education and skills training programmes.

This chapter seeks to address the important role that technology could play in the development of Nigeria, and in the alleviation of the poverty of its people. It will consider the level of technological advancement in vital sectors of the economy such as agriculture, industry, and telecommunications.

Agricultural production and technological development

Nigeria has large expanses of arable land, rivers, streams, lakes, forests, and grassland, in addition to a vibrant population with the capability to sustain agricultural production. It has been observed that 'the major characteristics of Nigerian Agriculture evolved over the years mainly in response to the resource endowment of the country, the state of technological advancement and the cultural practices prevalent in the various communities'.³⁵² The sector is also characterised by a dualistic structure – in other words, by the predominance of traditional farming systems (accounting for about 90 per cent of output, such as shifting cultivation, crop rotation, terrace farming, and mixed farming), alongside the modern sub-sector, which employs improved methods of production and farm management.

Over the years various strategies have been developed to ensure a sustainable increase in food production. They include agricultural financing, research, and training and extension for dissemination of proven technology.

Although these measures resulted in an increase in output, there has been a decline in the agricultural production index. The result for the economy is a reduction in the sector's contribution to GDP, and a simultaneous drop in domestic prices of food, owing to high levels of imported food. As has been observed, the dominant agricultural practices in Nigeria presently do not favour high productivity.³⁵³ Among the reasons accounting for low agricultural output are the 'low rate of adoption of appropriate technology'³⁵⁴ and 'absence of affordable, environmentally sound technology'.³⁵⁵

Industrial development and technology

Policy perspectives

Over the years, various policy strategies have been developed to promote industrial advancement in Nigeria. These included the encouragement of small and medium-scale enterprises, adoption of import-substitution measures, expansion of indigenous participation, provision of incentive packages, and expansion of the intermediate and capital-goods sectors.³⁵⁶ Government played a leading role in the development of the industrial sector and also encouraged foreign direct investment. The role of the public sector in industrial development, however, began to diminish during the period of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP).

The information reviewed shows that manufacturing production increased in the early years after independence, and its contribution to GDP averaged 13 per cent by 1982. However, the annual growth of the sub-sector dropped to -0.9 per cent between 1995 and 1999. The contribution of the whole industrial sector to GDP has been described as unsatisfactory; between 1995 and 1999, it contributed only 6.5 per cent.³⁵⁷

Small and medium-scale enterprises

The drop in the level of contribution of the manufacturing sector resulted in a shift in focus to the small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs).

The idea was to use the SMEs as the pivot for industrial development, at the same time as improving technological skills and capability available in the country.³⁵⁸ The support provided to the SMEs through deliberate government policies ensured their growth. It has been estimated that they constitute 70 per cent of industrial establishments and account for about 70 per cent of industrial employment.³⁵⁹

Influence of industry on technological development

The boost given to industrial development, and the massive importation of technology, should have made Nigeria an industrial giant; but in fact the industrial sector has failed to grow over the years, for a number of reasons.³⁶⁰ Prominent among them are the following.

- The lack of innovation in products and production processes, owing to inadequate investment in basic industrial research.
- A lack of serious commitment to establishing research and development laboratories or overhauling obsolete ones.
- Weak linkages among government, the private sector, and the universities for the purposes of exploiting research findings.
- A weak technological base to support growth in manufacturing activities.
- Declining standards of education and skills acquisition.

Impact of low industrial development on well-being

The drop in industrial output, coupled with the government's labour-rationalisation policy, resulted in retrenchment of staff in both public and private agencies, thus worsening the unemployment situation.³⁶¹ It has been said that even with a projected modest growth in population, unless Nigeria 'manages to pull itself up by its own bootstraps, it will be further entrapped by the vicious circle of demographic-induced aggravation of poverty with majority of people unemployed, uneducated, ill clad and disease ridden'.³⁶²

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

Policy framework

The establishment of the National Communications Commission in 1992, charged with responsibility for ensuring the provision of an adequate, effective, and efficient telecommunications system, has greatly contributed to the development of the ICT sector. In spite of this, Nigeria lags behind many countries within the African region and globally.³⁶³ It is on record that the telecommunications sector is beset with problems created by inadequate infrastructure and old and obsolete equipment.³⁶⁴ This situation poses a great challenge to the government in its effort to raise the living standards of its citizens.

This section will focus on various aspects of Information and Communications Technology, including telecommunications, computers, Internet, CD-ROM, satellite, and cable services.

Telecommunications

The telecommunications sector is presently being restructured in line with the government's policy of encouraging an economy driven by the private sector. The main thrust of the government's National Telecommunications Policy is 'to achieve the modernisation and rapid expansion of the telecommunications network and services'.³⁶⁵ To this end, the government has set both short-term and medium-term objectives for revamping the sector. They include promotion of competitiveness in the sector and increased accessibility of improved technology; institutional and legal reforms; and measures to meet the service needs of the social, commercial, and industrial sectors.³⁶⁶

Coverage

The extent of telecommunications coverage is assessed on the basis of *teledensity*, which measures the number of people to a telephone line. At the time of Nigeria's independence in 1960, there were 18,724 telephones for a population of about 40 million: a teledensity of about 0.5 telephone lines per thousand people. Since independence, there have been a number of development plans for the expansion and modernisation of the telecommunications networks and services. Most of these plans were not implemented.³⁶⁷ It is estimated that Nigeria, with a population of 120 million, has a total of 400,000 connected telephone lines, out of 700,000 available lines.

This gives a teledensity of one line per 600 people, as against one line to 10 people, as recommended by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU).³⁶⁸ According to the ITU standards, Nigeria requires 12 million telephone lines to meet the needs of the people.

Telecommunications and poverty

The importance of an effective and efficient telecommunications system is that it contributes tremendously towards economic growth. Analysis done by ITU suggests that every one per cent increase in teledensity results in an increase of about three per cent in GDP.³⁶⁹ In view of the importance of telecommunications, an analyst of the sector has noted that 'there is a clear, almost functional relationship between the wealth of the country (measured in GNP per capita) and the telephone density. Deficiency in telecommunications infrastructure translates to some form of imbalance in the development process.'³⁷⁰

Another measure used in assessing the level of accessibility of telecommunication facilities is the level of technological divide: that is, the differences between rural and urban areas, and disparities between rich and poor and between men and women, with regard to availability of ICT facilities. Using availability of telephone lines as an index, the data revealed that 234,000 lines out of 400,000, or 58.5 per cent, are located in Lagos alone. It is mainly the rich élite who can afford access to ICT facilities. Furthermore, more men than women have access to these facilities. The conclusion drawn is that the provision of services is biased towards urban users, and also that it has widened the gap between rich and poor on one hand and between men and women on the other.³⁷¹

The cost of installing telephones in facilities in offices, firms, and households is very high, as is the per-minute cost of making a call. The tariff structure in Nigeria has been described as one of the most prohibitive in the world.³⁷² Access is made even more difficult by inadequate lines and high costs of installation. The loss to the economy is very great, as the country is not able to reap the benefits of ICT.³⁷³

Computer penetration

'Computer penetration' refers to the number of users of computers across all sectors of the economy. In 1987, the Micro-computer Association of Nigeria (MIVAN) was established with a view to

promoting informatics in the country. In 1988 the government introduced computer literacy into the secondary-school curriculum as part of the effort to develop skills required for a computer-literate society. The National Universities Council (NUC) and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) complemented the efforts of the government by introducing courses in computer literacy in the institutions under their control.

These initiatives resulted in a rapid increase in the number of computers and trained personnel. However, it is estimated that computer access and use as at 1999 was confined to 0.64 per cent of the population.³⁷⁴ It is common to find that some of the few computers in both public and private offices are either not used or are under-utilised, while the use of the manual typewriter is still a common feature. It has been observed that engagement with digital technology is an imperative if increased productivity is the objective,³⁷⁵ and that the number of computers in a country is one indicator for measuring productivity, competitiveness, and human development. The implication is that the lower the number of computers, the lower the level of output, and the lower the level of national income available for improving the political, social, and economic well-being of the people.

The Internet

The indicators used to measure the level of Internet connectivity are the number of host sites, the number of users, and the number of Internet service providers (ISPs). As at 1998, 38 ISPs were registered, but as at 2000/2001 only 12 were active. In terms of the number of users, although the number has increased beyond its 1998 level of 3000, access to Internet facilities in the country is geographically limited. Related to this is the cost of accessing the Internet, which is very high: among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa.

Electricity

Nigeria has an abundant supply of energy sources. It is endowed with thermal, hydro, solar, and oil resources, and yet it is described as an energy-poor country, because the sector is relatively under-developed. The statistics available show that only about one third of Nigeria, or approximately 40 per cent of the population, has

access to electricity. Most people depend on fuel wood and kerosene. The distribution of electricity shows great disparities between rural and urban households, and between rich and poor neighbourhoods in the urban areas.

The following examples are based on 1998 data. In the States of Jigawa, Kebbi, Sokoto, Katsina, and Taraba, 10 per cent of households had access to electricity; in Yobe, Borno, Bauchi, Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, and Benue the figure was 15 per cent. These two groups were classified as energy-poor States. The energy-rich States were Edo, Kwara, Ogun, and Oyo, with access by more than 60 per cent of the people, while in Lagos more than 90 per cent of households had electricity.³⁷⁶

Although these figures might have changed since then, the pattern remains the same. The policy implications are clear: the infrastructure must be improved, in order to increase public access. If Nigeria is to play an active role in the global market, the development of the Information and Communications Technology sub-sector is essential – and this cannot be achieved while the energy sector lags behind.

Broadcasting

The broadcasting sub-sector, it is argued, has been the major source of information for the great majority of the Nigerian people. In 1997, UNICEF estimated that there were 226 radios and 66 television sets per 1000 people: a relatively high level of per capita accessibility. In recent times, there has been a proliferation of radio and television stations, thus contributing to increased coverage. Radio is regarded as the most effective communication tool for creating awareness of government development policies and for disseminating information, because the number of people with access to radio sets is large. In spite of the vital role that broadcasting plays, it is still beset with problems, such as an inability to produce programmes, and lack of modern broadcasting technologies. Microwave and satellite transmission of programmes have been introduced, but reception is limited to an élite few.³⁷⁷

Assessment of technological development

The Technological Advancement Index (TAI) is one of the main tools used to measure how

successfully a country is creating and diffusing technology and skills development, which is related to the capacity to be innovative. An assessment of these elements led to the conclusion that Nigeria lags behind most countries, because resources devoted to research and development in the sector are only about 0.01 per cent of GDP, while technology creation is almost non-existent.³⁷⁸ The assessment continues: 'There is severe technological marginalisation in Nigeria. This is partly because the provision of the facilities and the improvement of human capacities are urban biased. In any case, the country has for too long paid only lip service to scientific and technological education. The long term neglect of research and development in Nigeria is largely responsible for the present sorry state of affairs in the field of ICT.'³⁷⁹

Technology and governance

The following reforms have been proposed to address the problems associated with the technological sector, in order to ensure that ICT facilities contribute to the development of democracy and the establishment of governance systems:

- The private sector, and particularly civil society, should work towards ensuring that access to information by a large majority of the people is democratised or decentralised.
- Barriers that create parallel markets (one for those with income and education and one for those without) for ICT should be removed under a democratic system of governance.
- Effective utilisation of ICT facilities for the democratisation of the country will help to promote participatory communication, which is essential for improving people's lives in areas such as agriculture (food security), health care, education, and governance.

Conclusion

Nigeria is an economic giant in terms of resources, size of market, and the political influence that it wields within the African continent. The challenge is for the country to assert itself in the international global economy. One way forward is to invest more in technological development and research and development activities that affect the livelihood of the people.

This is essential because, as we have seen, the level of poverty in the country is related to the level of technological development.

It has also been argued in this paper that there is a need to restructure the economy through diversification, improving the quality of human capital, attracting direct foreign investment into vital sectors (not just extractive sectors), and above all improving the quality of infrastructure (including the ICT infrastructures). The process has begun in the telecommunications sector, and although the journey will not be easy, Nigeria will get there. Getting there is dependent on the political will and commitment to sustain democracy, revamp the economy, and improve the social assets of the people within the framework of a sustainable environment.

10 Conclusion

This report has attempted to provide indices of poverty in Nigeria, taking into consideration the various dimensions in which poverty is perpetuated in the country. It is important to reiterate that the limited availability of reliable information raises issues for programme development. The authors have tried to assess the degree to which the people are denied sustainable livelihoods, and the multiplicity of factors that explain the reasons for this. After defining the concept of poverty and the various mechanisms used to analyse the level of poverty, Chapter 3 of the report examined in detail the poverty situation in Nigeria. The information available indicates a high disparity in the levels of income between men and women, and between rural and urban areas, and an uneven distribution of social services across States and within States. This chapter further exposed the level of deprivation and the lack of livelihood security in Nigeria, which are compounded by the influence of certain external factors.

Chapter 4 reviewed the social sector, emphasising the inadequacy of and inaccessibility of social-service provision in Nigeria. The key elements were a review of the health-care system, the level of its decline, the services provided, and the general health status of Nigerians, with particular reference to women and children. The data reveal that the Nigerian health-care system is characterised by poor infrastructure, high infant-mortality rates, and poor nutritional status of children – problems compounded by high fertility rates and high maternal mortality rates. The overall social sector is also characterised by general food insecurity, lack of access to safe water and sanitation, and the widespread prevalence of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Also indicated in the findings is the high level of rural–urban migration, owing to the imbalances in the distribution of social services and infrastructure; the results are poor urban housing and high pollution levels. Findings show that the education sector is in a similar condition, resulting in high levels of illiteracy, low school-enrolment rates, high education costs, and a weak absorptive capacity

for school graduates. The chapter concludes that the level of deprivation is directly linked to a weak policy environment, inadequate funding, and ineffective implementation of policy. In human terms, this translates into insecure livelihoods, low incomes, and lack of access to social amenities.

Addressing the causes of extreme poverty in Nigeria requires political will and commitment by the ruling elite. This explains why Chapter 5 focused on the political system and poverty. In an attempt to assess the links between polity and poverty, this chapter reviewed the political history of the country. It also explored the objectives set in 1999 by the Nigerian Constitution, which provides a guide to the machinery of government that should manage the development process. There was a consideration of the state of the judiciary and access to justice, concluding that the denial of rights and the lack of justice perpetuate poverty. The chapter further explored the links between democracy and conflict, the debt burden and national sovereignty, and the challenges of the present democratic system of governance. The chapter ended by drawing attention to the inter-relationships between promotion of the rule of law, justice and equity, human rights, empowerment, transparency and accountability: the main pillars for improving the socio-economic well-being of the people. Poor and vulnerable groups cannot build social assets in their effort to sustain their livelihoods, if the political system does not ensure and protect their rights to create and own those assets.

Wealth creation is a product of the types of economic policy that a government designs and implements. The ability of poor and vulnerable people to gain access to livelihood assets is greatly influenced by the economic policies of the government. Chapter 6 therefore considered the economic policy environment and how it affects people's livelihoods. The exposition began with a review of the structure of the economy and the performance of the various sectors in terms of their relationship to poverty. Other aspects reviewed included the factors accounting for structural imbalances in the

economy, the policy perspectives of the democratic government and how these differ from (or resemble) past policies. Some budgets were analysed to expose the level of inconsistency between policy directives that they contained, as against actual budgetary allocations. The picture shows that budgetary provisions are not necessarily geared towards improving the social sectors. Again, the efforts aimed at alleviating poverty have not created the desired impact, because the emphasis has been on the establishment of 'empires' (new institutions). The chapter concludes that poverty-eradication initiatives have suffered from lack of commitment and the failure to involve beneficiaries. The concept of popular participation, which is a necessary condition for improving livelihoods, has been neglected in the policy-formulation process.

Trade, although an integral part of the economy, was isolated in Chapter 6 to help to identify some of the external factors that push people into poverty. This chapter offered an overview of the trade policy of Nigeria, showing that in spite of increased volumes of trade, various factors are impeding development. The attempt to promote regional trade has not helped much. Again, both structural weaknesses and the non-competitiveness of the Nigerian economy within the global market, coupled with inability to manage resources rationally, have not led to the desired effect of increased earnings from trade. The situation is worsened by the heavy debt burden, which diverts resources away from the measures required for improving people's lives.

In a country where the main source of livelihood for the people is agricultural production, and the national economy depends on oil exploration and extraction for more than 80 per cent of its revenue, understanding the link between poverty and the environment is essential. This explains why Chapter 8 begins with an analysis of the institutional and policy framework for ensuring environmentally sustainable means of livelihood for the people. The information clearly shows a weak institutional environment which means that policies are not rigorously enforced. Factors such as soil erosion, drought and desertification, and ecological imbalances have created unequal power relations and have severely disrupted the livelihoods of the people. Increased levels of urbanisation and ineffective environmental management systems have also affected the quality of services provided. The end result is the denial of access to livelihood sources, low levels of agricultural output, and poor health.

Ensuring men's and women's right to livelihood assets is an essential element in the effort to improve the well-being of the citizenry. An assessment of the situation of women and children shows that they are denied that right by legal and regulatory instruments, as well as by traditional and cultural practices. Chapter 9 considered how the various factors mentioned earlier affect the livelihood of women in Nigeria, in terms of employment rights, accessibility to land and credit, cultural and social practices, and the right to education. This chapter argued that women are discriminated against in many ways and, therefore, any poverty-alleviation initiative should focus on their upliftment, through the re-distribution of resources.

The final part of the report assessed the level of technological development in the various sectors of the economy, and the implications for productivity. The policy directions for both agriculture and industry are very clear; yet the agricultural sector remains predominantly a subsistence economy, while the industrial sector has not resulted in any major technological breakthrough. The low technological development has resulted in what has been termed 'demographic induced aggravation of poverty'. The telecommunications sub-sector is also poorly developed, computer penetration is low, and use of the Internet is limited to a privileged few. Electricity is equally unevenly distributed, and this results in biased development in favour of the major towns and cities. The weak technological environment denies people's right of access to information and therefore limits their potential sources of livelihood.

Nigeria is now under a democratic dispensation, which gives the people the opportunity to be part of the decision-making process and thereby have a voice in the fight against poverty. The poor are yet to see the dividends of democracy in terms of improved social services, increased agricultural production, increased incomes, and unrestricted access to information. Improving the situation calls for a concerted effort by all members of society. Changing it is a daunting challenge. Civil society must lead the process and be adequately informed. The compilation of this document is an attempt to equip civil society with the tools required for propelling such a change. Reforms are required both in the processes of policy formulation and in the provision and distribution of social goods, in addition to creating space for the poor and vulnerable to play a full part in the equitable development of Nigeria.

Notes

- 1 UNDP 2001, Central Bank of Nigeria 2000
- 2 UNDP National Planning Commission 1998/1999
- 3 UNDP 2001
- 4 NDHS 1999
- 5 *ibid.*
- 6 UNDP National Planning Commission 1998/1999
- 7 Hodges 2001
- 8 NDHS 1999
- 9 NDHS 1999
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 96 *ibid.*
 97 No statistics were provided for the South-South.
 98 NDHS 1999
 99 Hodges 2001
 100 NDHS 1999
 101 Hodges 2001
 102 *ibid.*
 103 *ibid.*
 104 Anaemia is common in pregnant women. In developing countries its effects are compounded by poor diet and continuous pregnancy and lactation cycles, increasing heavy workload and demands on women, repeated infections, and cultural taboos which force pregnant women to avoid protein intake.
 105 CPD is a symptom usually associated with women who have children young, before the pelvic area is fully developed. It is also common in women who were malnourished at an early age. The side effects, referred to as VVF/RVF, are grave, both physically as they include long-term incontinence of the bladder and bowel, and socially because the woman/child experiences social exclusion, and abandonment and divorce by her husband.
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 107 Hodges 2001
 108 United Nations Systems in Nigeria 1999
 109 *ibid.*
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 112 Rivers, streams, ponds, lakes and dams
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 141 FOS/UNICEF indicate that the rate of adult literacy is 48.9 per cent. (UN Systems in Nigeria 2001)
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