

**INEQUALITY, POVERTY AMONG NIGERIA WOMEN AND YOUTH AND THE CHALLENGES OF INCLUSIVE GROWTH IN POST 2015 MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDG)**

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**ABSTRACT:** *By all standards, economic growth is expected to reduce poverty, rather poverty in Nigeria has remained high as 112m people representing 67 percent of the population are in abject poverty while GDP rates fell to 7.68 per cent in 2011 from 8.60 in 2010. Income inequality was 0.3594(2010) and -25.9 in 2011(BOS,2012). If Millennium Development Goals (MDG) could affect poverty level in India and China, why has Nigeria's poverty level remained high? The study hence, examined the challenges of inequality and poverty reduction among Nigerian women and youth with focus on inclusive growth in post 2015 MDG. Content analysis of secondary literature was undertaken to address the problem of the study. Findings indicated that poverty in Nigeria is not affected due to misdirection of programmes from rural to urban areas, inadequate funding, lack of control, transparency and accountability and inadequate coverage of the poor. The study suggested that entrepreneurial training programmes and capability creation, combined with an all inclusive effort aimed at providing education and health facility, integrated growth, income distribution, and financing land ownership are highly required. Conclusively, poverty in Nigeria can be substantively reduced if an all inclusive approach is adopted covering entrepreneurial training backed with monitoring and accommodation of large coverage of the poor in the programme in post 2015 MDG plans.*

**KEYWORDS:** Inclusive Growth, Inequality, Poverty, Entrepreneurship

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The world today is not free from poverty and its effect on the citizenry as well as the economy. Nigeria's population, living in Poverty according to Soludo and BOS (2012) was 69% (2010), 74.2% (2011) while in Africa 56.5% lived in poverty in 1990, and 48.5% in 2010, (BOS 2015); income inequality stood at 0.3594(2010) and -25.9 in 2011(BOS 2012). Prevalent situations suggest a need for urgent and meaningful attention to the issues of poverty and inequality with particular attention to Nigeria. Between 1999 and to date, several programmes directed at addressing poverty in order to improve economic growth have been floated. The results could have been better than that obtained, but for the fact that programme execution was misdirected to urban areas instead of the rural, high-jacked by the political class, not properly funded, lacked control, transparency and accountability (Motorola, 2008; Oshewolo, 2010; Alao, 2013) and were not monitored where necessary.

By all standards, economic growth is expected to reduce poverty ([www.idrc.ca/EN...](http://www.idrc.ca/EN...)); contrary to this is the affirmation that economic growth does not lead to new jobs or increased incomes, especially as regards women and youth. Inclusive growth is an impactful programme influence that can enhance the status of women and youth. In the current circumstance, efforts are being directed at creating support for entrepreneurial efforts of either the women or youth.

In the rural areas, women and youth have experienced more of poverty due to the prevailing culture which requires women to stay back and keep home and youth that are not yet of age were required to help in house chores, and street trading. This disregards the import of 'training a girl-child and training a nation'. Many could not be schooled, while some drop out, due to lack of resources to train them. The men therefore were regarded as breadwinners. With increasing enlightenment, women now see the need to be engaged in order to contribute their quota to the home and thus improve their status as well as the family in general. The effect of poverty is high on women and youth (Moghadam,2005; Yoshikwa & Beardslee, 2015), therefore addressing the problem of poverty has to focus on an inclusive programme that will impact the life of the two groups. As a result of poverty, both women and youth pass through emotional, mental and behavioural trauma. The long run effect is accentuated on the future personality of the individual. Given the fact that women statistics is high (BOS,2010), their contribution to the economic strength of the nation, if compared should be commensurate. Unfortunately, women are still far behind in the stream of nation development (Ojo, 2011) as their positions are still being agitated for even in governance.

### **Statement of Problem**

The Millennium Development Goal (MDG 2015) report indicated that progress had been made in reducing extreme poverty in India and China, halving the number of people without reliable sources of drinkable water, slum dwelling conditions ameliorated and gender equality in terms of education and health achieved. The World Bank decried that poverty in Nigeria has increased considerably with 112m people, which is about 67% of the population in abject poverty, while Nigerian Economic Report (2014) indicated that rates declined in GDP 7.68 growth in 2011 whereas it was 8.60 in 2010.

The basic problem identified for this study is, why Nigeria that is one of the leading economic nations in Africa in terms of economic growth, blessed with natural resources and good climate could not translate these opportunities into inclusive growth thereby reducing the rate of poverty and impacting the lives of the citizenry positively. This motivated the paper to examine the challenges of inequality, poverty among Nigerian women and youth on inclusive growth in post 2015 MDG.

The sub-objectives of the study therefore are to:

- (i) Evaluate the extent of poverty and inequality reduction in Nigeria since 1999 to 2014.
- (ii) To examine the challenges of reducing poverty and in-equality in Nigeria
- (iii) To determine the lessons that could be learnt from South East Asia in combating inequality and poverty in Nigeria.

The study emphasises the consistently inadequate attention that has been given to poverty reduction issue, considering the vital need for enhancing the status of women and youth as a needed and necessary sector in affecting overall global poverty problem. Equally, if countries like China and India with large population like Nigeria could effectively address the nations' poverty, governance in Nigeria needs to re-direct and address her policies meaningfully. Hence governance in Nigeria will be enhanced through the study, the women and youth that constitute the focus of the study should be impacted by improved inclusive approach as well as the MDG in looking critically to the aspect of entrepreneurship inclusion in the programme.

The study focused on the MDG approach to poverty reduction in order to sensitize Nigerian policy makers to the needful in addressing the poverty problem.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Analysing the inequalities in gender statistics, the National Population Commission (2014) submitted that household expenditure by family heads was on food, of which female-headed families spend more. Likewise, the females are generally regarded and known as lacking in wealth factors such as land and building, investments and other valuable properties. In fact, those that are widows lose a lot of their wealth to husbands' death because of the culture subsisting in their locality. As few as 20% are engaged in industry and agriculture, while majority are into buying and selling; whereas men are into industry and agriculture, majority of the women also, are students, retired and unemployed. This places them outright as absolutely poor especially with the unequal dispositions to income resources, health, education and home, and other infrastructures that make life conducive.

Several authors (Aigbokan 2000, Oyekale 2010, Leong 2013, Anandi & Kumar 2014) have identified inequality in various facets as responsible for the experiences of many that are either deprived or socially excluded. Inequality is manifested in the area of trading, financial systems, socials, economic as well as dependency on economic interrelationships between developing and developed nations Abimiku, (CBN 1999; Aighokan2000).The challenge is further emphasised given the following statistics:

Out of about 187 countries in human development index (HDI) programme that are ranked, Nigeria is 152<sup>nd</sup>, and proper observation indicated that in all the indices considered, Nigeria happened to record a low performance consistently.

HDI Rank	Country	1985	1990	2000	2005	2010
152	Nigeria	2.6	2.6	2.5	2.6	2.7

Source: [hdr.undp.org/en/content/average-annual-population-growth-rate](http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/average-annual-population-growth-rate) UNDESA

### Education index for Nigeria

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Index	0.415	0.417	0.419	0.421	0.423	0.425	0.425	0.425	0.426

Source: HDI office 2013 – Calculated using mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling.

Estimated GNI per capital (PPP) Female (Constant 2011 PPPS)

Nigeria GNI 4068 (crude estimate because data were not available)

**Gender Development Index**

HDI Rank Country 2000 2005 2010 2013  
 152 Nigeria ----- No data -----

HDI Female 0.458 {**very high** 0.874; **Low** 0.446}

HDI Male 0.503 {**Very high** 0.887; **Low** 0.506}

Health Index	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Very high	0.916	0.919	0.922	0.924	0.926
High	0.827	0.830	0.833	0.835	0.838
Medium	0.720	0.725	0.729	0.733	0.737
Low	0.597	0.587	0.594	0.600	0.605
Nigeria	0.474	0.481	0.488	0.494	0.500

	Nigeria 2013	Other nations { <b>Highest</b> <b>Lowest</b> }	
Inequality Adjusting Education Index	0.233	0.769	0.241
Inequality Adjusting HDI	0.300	0.780	0.332

Intensity of Deprivation in Nigeria is 55.2% for 2013 (based on health, education & living standard) most countries did not have but Niger was 65% while Cameroon had 54.1%; the record of 55.2% for Nigeria is rather high given all the wealth at the disposal of the Nation, whereas Cameroon whose resources is a far cry to that of Nigeria is even lower than Nigeria. This is an indication of poor governance. The statistics above is an indication of the level of Nigeria's performance on all indices relating to inclusive growth, equality and living standards –education & health. For growth to be sustainable, and effective in reducing poverty, it needs to be inclusive (Berg & Osing, 2011).

Inclusive growth was described as not having specific and concise definition, CAFOD (2014) stated that in defining the inclusive growth, Asia development Bank (ADB), the World bank and the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC- IG) have different understandings of the word, inclusive growth. Inclusive growth, as proposed by Anandi & Kumar (2014) is a unified measure which integrates growth and income distribution into a single measure. Chakrabarty (2010) opined that inclusive growth is created when people have access to economic opportunities. This is needful if the goal of inclusive growth is to be achieved and is further emphasized through OECD (2012) that inclusive growth which reduces the gap between the rich and the poor requires equal sharing of growth dividend in specific dimensions such as health, jobs, skills, clean environment and effective institutions. However in Nigeria, the realities on ground (high level of corruption, diversion of resources to private account, lack of focus, non-intentional policy making as regards poverty issues) revealed that the government has not captured the real poverty reduction strategy either by intent, commission or omission.

### **Determination of Need**

The needs of the poor vary widely from financial, knowledge, health, security, to home needs, shelter, even childlessness, among others. Often, across cultures women spend close to 15-18 hours with the off-springs, during these times they bear sudden and immediate needs when the household head is not immediately available or where the woman (widow, single mother) is the head of such home. Equally, such widow is seen to have started carrying the burden that two people normally should carry. Determining the need of such mother in line with possible help would have been generalized. In the same vein, a woman under relative poverty situation is also helped generally. Streamlining a general approach that weighs the needs with help provision could be meaningful in the kind of empowerment made available.

### **Poverty and Entrepreneurship focus**

Poverty is conceived as a situation of depravity, hunger, helplessness, disease and lack in meeting essential needs by individuals. The approach to progress by MDG on reducing poverty, involves focusing a long time action plan in partnership with beneficiary nations. Further action included reducing child-mortality rate, increasing primary school enrolment for boys and girls, improving maternal health-care and provision of needful infrastructures such as good portable water for drinking (MDG report 2012).

Entrepreneurship has been promoted as playing a central role in virtually all national socio-economic development programmes (Amue et al, 2014). In the effort on reducing poverty and inequality in living standards, it is essential to think of empowerment in terms of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship requires creating new ideas, improving on existing ones and being dynamic in the approach to executing the business. Enhancing and sustaining the level of attainment require educating the poor females and youth and supporting them financially to get to the level of continued sustenance of set goals of MDG beyond 2015. Situating equity and inequality within the capability approach, the drive should be focused on active participation of the identified or representative poor to indicate required area of need and individual passion or skill for effective result. Leong (2013) suggested that what is required of women is to take a leap into setting up a business of which they have personal convictions and exercise the will and power to make it work. Focusing on who to be as an entrepreneur (producer or service provider), capital funds available may not be easily forthcoming; this is where the MDG can come in to assist in actualising the dream.

### **Concepts on Inclusive Growth**

Bushan (2013), argued that a precise definition of inclusive growth may not be obtained off-hand as people's perception of inclusive growth vary, he however suggested five elements which must be identified in any meaning given inclusive growth. The elements are, the outcome that inclusive growth seeks to achieve, clear-cut definition of the approach to measuring inclusive growth, a simple working definition of inclusive growth and results expected, the bottom line is that for growth to be inclusive, the consumption by the excluded 20% must also increase by at least, the same rate as growth. Bushan's summary of inclusive growth is 'an inclusive growth environment, in which the welfare of excluded people improves faster than the average incomes in the country'.

Inclusive growth as described by Ianchovichina and Lundstrom (2009), has several facets to it such as 'broad-based growth', 'pro-poor growth' or 'shared growth'. The definition thus is

captured as 'Inclusive growth that allows people to contribute to and benefit from economic growth'. Growth is real when, as an entrepreneur's production is enhanced and added to the market.

In considering inclusive growth, Chakrabarty (2010) opined that inclusive growth has two facets, that of pace and the pattern of economic growth. He thus defined inclusive growth as 'a strategy of economic development' and growth being 'inclusive when it creates economic opportunities along with ensuring access to them'. Applying this framework takes care of inequalities in providing for improved education, health care for all and good living standards. The strategic approach to doing this is focusing a sustained and inclusive economic growth programme for 2015 and beyond in Nigeria. As presented in the framework of the three authors, inclusive growth needs to be fast, directional, paced, and also follow a determined pattern of growth which must be appraised for effectiveness from time to time. Depending on strategies adopted, pro-poor growth will reduce inequality (Melamed & Samman, 2013)) thus as gender inequalities in education, employment and other growth indices are reduced, growth will also increase.

$$\text{EDU, EMP, HTH} = f(\text{growth})$$

$$E, E, H \propto 1/G$$

Where EDU = Education, EMP Employment and HTH = Health

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Inclusive Growth based on Innovation**

Innovation theory for inclusive growth was propounded by George et al (2012). In the discus, inclusive innovation was considered as pointing to inequalities that may arise in the development and commercialization as a result of value creation and capture. Innovation for inclusive growth was brought to fore as innovation that benefits the disenfranchised, as a process and as well as a performance outcome. Innovation involves the departure from normal practice such that expected results are achieved optimally. The poverty reduction approach has always focused giving of grants or loans to the poor for starting a business or vocation, unfortunately within one or two years both the capital and yield would have been ploughed into home needs such as education, health, feeding and other upkeep needs. This is why a new approach in this direction would require an understanding of the personality needs of the poor beforehand. Opportunities for the development of theory and empirical research in the field of entrepreneurship, strategy and marketing were further recommended. In line with the innovation approach is the Pro-poor growth Model propounded by Vellala et al (2014) from the Indian context. Different models were developed overtime but the focus was basically on a faster and more inclusive growth. The inclusive growth is a broad-based high growth in which the poor not only benefits but partakes in the process. It creates new opportunities and also ensures equal access to them by all. A combination of access to opportunities and innovation is expected to pave way for inclusive growth. In the consideration for entrepreneurship the combination of innovation and opportunities is also critical to success especially where women embrace this to overcome all challenges.

### **The Social Exclusion Theory – World Summit, Copenhagen 1995**

The theory stated that people and society are exposed to poverty because of discrimination. The conduct of individuals depended on interests and capabilities in which the social structure anchors on a specific form of labour segregation. This makes the groups affected to suffer exclusion and deprivation in terms of accessibility to self rights, welfare and other economic opportunities. Considering the suggestion that men, as income earners were worst hit by poverty (Abimiku 2006), further cursory look need to be taken on women and youth that are deprived under the men who are worst hit as to what class of poverty they might be in.

In summary, inclusive growth has a relationship with innovation, pace and pattern of growth; this can be helpful for policy makers to pursue in attaining economic and inclusive growth. Innovation is required in the approaches to attaining inclusive growth as the problems facing the poor are diverse with individual peculiarities in some cases. As observed in the execution of poverty policies in South East Asia focusing on inclusiveness of all indices to acquire meaningful growth, Nigerian government will do well to set the pace in providing an enabling environment for active participation of interested NGOs and private organs as well.

### **Empirical Studies**

Adedeji et al (2013), established that high growth in selected African countries resulted in increased average opportunities in education and health. However, distribution of the opportunities varied across countries depending on the country specific policies.

Essentially, it is noteworthy that for inclusive growth to be attained, then efforts need not be spared to fulfil the goals of holistic education, health, improved living standards in all sectors that touch on poverty.

According to Oyekale et al (2010), household survey data obtained from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) used in a study showed that in 2004, income inequality is higher in rural areas than urban. Wage and non-farm income had the highest contributions to urban income inequality, while agricultural and wage incomes contributed the most to rural inequality. Household size, urbanization and education significantly increased income inequality, while age, paid/salary jobs, and non-farm enterprises decreased it ( $p < 0.05$ ). Between 1998 and 2004, income redistribution reduced poverty but income growth increased it. It was recommended, among others, that welfare enhancing programs that will benefit urban/rural poor should be identified, while better economic opportunities should be created for those in rural areas. This position affirms the approach adopted by MDG focusing on improving the welfare of the people, and in this wise addressing for women and youth sector.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Observed Attainments So Far**

- (i) In Education – From the analysis below, each year is an indication of the effects of the efforts so far on poverty though the focus in inclusive growth

	1990	2000	2008	2012	2015(Target )
Enrolment in Primary Education	68.0	89.6	88.8		100%

Primary Six completion	58.0	76.7	80.0	
Proportion of females completing primary six				83.2 F 91.6M
Girls per 100 boys (primary educ)	76	78	85	90
Girls per 100 boys (secondary)	75	81	80	85

## (ii). Health

Trend in Underweight Children	1990	2000	2010	2011
Proportion under age 5 (reduction in	37	30	25	25

In the context of poverty and the need for a new approach by executors of the policies, further consideration of Nigerian females; demand that action be taken in the interest of achieving the goal rather than making policies for the sake of it. Challenges still exist in promoting gender equality and women empowerment as depicted in the analysis below.

## Trend in Seats held by Women in National Parliament

Year	2000	2007	2008	2009	2012
Percentage of Women	3.10	7.70	7.50	7.50	7.00

**Challenges**

The MDG goals are intended to tackle the following challenges; eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, improve health for children and mothers, reduce child mortality, promote gender equality and empower women, and develop global partnership for development among others.

Policies and programmes constructed to eradicate poverty lack coherence and coordination and are often ill-adapted to the needs and realities of those living in extreme poverty. Programmes often are not effective as they usually fail to reach those in utmost need.

Data, where it is available does not often relate with current development and so cannot be useful for a meaningful decision or action.

There is always a need for basing action on the needs of programme beneficiaries, in order to achieve the desired result, but reaching the target beneficiaries one on one and harnessing their desires may be difficult.

Often the beneficiary –nations have their programme plans; thus there is a need for harnessing goals between the MDG and the nation in focus.

According to Ophi et al, (2013), the poverty situations (malnutrition, poor sanitation, ramshackle schools, diseases and lack of necessary infrastructures) of the people overlap, thus extending intended target period.

### **Lessons from South East Asia**

According to AEC (2015), a comparison of the efforts on relieving poverty indicates HDI increases of 34% in South-East Asia between 1990 and 2013, the UNDP (2014) revealed that 17 out of 52 African countries have achieved high and medium levels of human development. This was achieved due to the rapid economic growth made possible by increased resource flows from agriculture, resource extraction, improved governance and human capital development. Likewise, from the study by Adedeji et al (2013) on selected African countries, the importance of education and health, creating job opportunities, entrepreneurial trainings, and financing land ownership are vital to overcoming the challenges. This could be applicable to Nigeria as the five elements are very crucial to the peculiar case of poverty in Nigeria. Anyone that has a meaningful job on hand, duly sheltered and enjoys education and health provisions will move out of absolute poverty.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In Nigeria, there is hope for rapid improvement as young men and women respond fast to programmes that create an enabling environment for enhancing their capabilities. This study thus, highlights statistics pertaining to inclusive growth in the area of women leading a safe and healthy life, youth empowerment and improving living standard in two Asian countries (India and China) that have experienced inclusive growth. In Nigeria, in addressing poverty, had been encouraging self-dependence rather than citizens waiting on government to create employment or even employing them. This can only be achieved through entrepreneurial endeavours that engage them productively; addressing the challenges of poverty requires not only, but combined educational approach that involves classroom and vocational/entrepreneurial training. This also requires orienting beneficiaries in entrepreneurial financial management. What this requires therefore is a responsive sector to educate and enable relevant participants. This study posits therefore that in addition to health, security, and shelter and so on, a total education of women and youth which involves classroom and entrepreneurial orientation to pre-empt unemployment for school leavers and entrepreneurial empowerment for mothers, widows and retirees is the answer to Nigeria's poverty challenges.

This study suggests that more training programmes and capability creation that are useful for impacting them (youth and women) should be provided.

An all-inclusive effort aimed at unemployed women and youth as well as jobless able-bodied men should focus on attracting the students from universities. Also, fresh students who are about completing National youth service scheme and prison-inmates empowerment programme could be considered. These programmes should consider them as trainees who during that period are producing to create national wealth from which they are also paid monthly. After a two-year period of training, these trainees are expected to graduate to work on their own, based on their training resource. In the same consideration, it is required that a social saving scheme is floated to enhance their take-off. Lastly, a monitoring programme that requires regular report from the trainees will create an effective impact on the resources already expended. It is however important that the monitoring team be men and women of proven integrity, transparency and commitment to duty. Otherwise, consultancy or professional bodies could be involved to see the programmes to a productive and meaningful end. Observably, the Nairobi conference in June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015 from the theme, 'finding the key to unlock Africa's

growth and reduce poverty', focused inclusive growth thereby suggesting the need to create jobs, educate, and enhance good health in order to reduce poverty effectively.

## CONCLUSION

Out of 187 countries covered in the HDI poverty reduction programme, Nigeria ranked 152, it is disheartening even with the wealth endowed the nation. As succinctly indicated by Adebisi (2014), poverty level reduction can only be achieved with proper harnessing and efficient utilization of resources to strengthen the base for attainment of MDG 2015 action programme. This should be combined with the MDG approach to education and health enhancement. If the feat could be attained in China and India and with America's drop in poverty level to 14.5% as at 2010, then it is possible in Nigeria, if all stakeholders will do their part.

The effort of MDGs should be seen as complimentary to restoration programmes that government can bring on. Notably, many countries like Chile, Indonesia and Malaysia have depended on exportation of natural products and the economy is better, an indication for refocusing agriculture rather than oil. Nigerian government should learn from those countries that diversified their economy with natural resources, noting that countries that are oil extract resource-based usually experience setbacks in economic growth Page (2008).

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