

Endemic Poverty and the Challenges of Peace and Development in Africa

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Abstract

This study seeks to explore the nexus between the alarming rate of poverty and developmental retardation with the attendant implications for peace and security in various independent states of Africa. Using descriptive method of data collection, the study identifies that failure of successive governments in various countries on the continent to creatively address the problem of poverty through purpose-driven policy responses has invariably posed devastating threats to the search for durable peace, and hindered the quest for sustainable development on the continent. In corollary, Africa's slow pace of development accounts for the continued intensity of poverty, thereby impacting negatively on peace and security. Therefore, the study contends that efforts at ensuring stable peace, which is the bedrock of sustainable development, can only yield the desired fruition if holistic approach is designed for addressing the menace of poverty afflicting the continent and its people. In the final analysis, the study offers recommendations towards ensuring peace and development with a view to preventing endemic poverty confronting the continent and its citizenry.

Key words: Developmental retardation, durable peace, equitable policy responses, sustainable development.

Introduction

Apparently, endemic poverty has remained one of the defining characteristics of post cold war African societies. This undesirable phenomenon has not only posed significant threats to peace, security and stability, but has also hindered the quest for accelerated growth and sustainable development on the continent. Extant development studies have attributed the pathological and complex nature of poverty and inequality on the continent to a number of factors ranging from colonialism and incongruous developmental initiatives by external dynamics, to cultural pluralism, identity crises and regionalism (Dixon, 2002; Rodney, 2005; Zalk-Williams, 2002; Young, 1993).

However, it could be too simplistic and grossly misleading to reduce the factors responsible to the phenomenon of inherent poverty in Africa to the foregoing at the expense of other internal factors. Hence, this analysis submits that the root of endemic poverty ravaging Africa and its people is primarily internal arising from protracted internal conflicts and failed governance and leadership processes, and resulting in developmental crises. This has invariably reduced the continent to a dependent partner of other continents within the context of international political economy (Olukoshi, 2009).

Following from the foregoing, poverty remains a cog in Africa's wheel of progress, and in its attempt to experience some relativity of durable peace in comparison to other continents of the globe. Put in another way, the prevalence of poverty in Africa constitutes a predicament on the way of stable peace and integrated development. It is disheartening to note that development impasse and the attendant manifestation of poverty in Africa has aggravated social vices such as sex trafficking industry and related sexual engagement among women (Bellamy, Williams, & Griffin, 2012).

The thesis is that without fully comprehending and mastering the underlying factors and forces that have sustained poverty and inequality in Africa, durable peace and meaningful development will continue to elude the continent, despite its endowed potential for stability, progress and prosperity. Suffice it to say that until the causes of poverty are scientifically diagnosed and carefully addressed, lasting peace, which is a prerequisite for development and bedrock of political stability, cannot be realistic. Hence, given the inseparable link between poverty and developmental retardation, which invariably constitutes hindrance to peace, there is the compelling urge for African leaders to rise up to their social contract responsibility by maximizing Africa's potential for wealth creation and human capital developments for the purpose of tackling the problems of abject poverty, inequality and social exclusion. Africa in this study encompasses all the continental African states, Madagascar and all the islands surrounding Africa (Akeju, *et al.*, 1991:25).

Conceptual Clarifications

An analysis of poverty and its implications for peace and development-related issues in Africa will be more instructive if relevant concepts are contextually explored. In this study, therefore, the concepts of poverty, peace and development will be carefully analysed with a view to dissecting the symbiosis among them within the purview of the present analysis.

Poverty

Despite its perennial reality in human existence coupled with the fact that it has been a concern in human societies since the inception of recorded history, the phenomenon of poverty has not received a unanimously acceptable definition. This is occasioned by a number of factors including the complex and pervasive nature of poverty as a social phenomenon; the specific conditions that determine poverty in various societies; and variety of paradigms underpinning the concept of poverty arising from multi-dimensional perceptions of peoples on the concept across cultures and societies. That notwithstanding, scholarly attempts have been made in providing conceptual and theoretical explanations for poverty both in general and specific terms.

A popular school of thought on poverty, to which the present study unequivocally subscribes, conceptualises it within the context of monetary and fulfilment of basic needs and sustainable human capital development paradigm.

Within the framework of monetary and basic needs analysis, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1996 views poverty as:

The inability to provide for physical substances to the extent of being incapable of protecting human dignity. These include food, clothing and shelter, portable water, health services, basic education, public transportation and work (Kankwenda, Gregoire, Legros & Ouedraogo, 2000: 64).

On the basis of this paradigm, people are considered poor if their incomes fall short of poverty threshold of \$1 per day. Thus to keep people afloat above poverty threshold, the basic human needs must, of necessity, be made available on quantitative and qualitative proportions, within accessible range, and at affordable prices. Perhaps, that is why UNICEF in 1997 presumes that a person is said to be poor when they are deprived of the "material requirements for minimally acceptable fulfilment of human needs, including food" (cited in Kankwenda *et al* 2000).

From human development approach, the UNDP submits that poverty prevails in a society when:

... opportunities and human development are denied – to lead a **desirable, well-meaning**, long, healthy, creative life and to enjoy a decent standard of living, freedom, dignity, self-respect and the respect of others (Kankwenda *et al*, 2000: 64; **emphasis added**).

This approach tends to consider a person or a people as being poor beyond the scope of microeconomic analysis to include the socially excluded, politically deprived and culturally marginalised individuals or groups in the society.

The UNDP further submits that poverty has various manifestations including:

lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihood; hunger and malnutrition; ill-health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments; and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterised by a lack of participation in decision-making and in civil, social and cultural life (cited in Kankwenda, *et al.*, 2000: 62-63).

Extant studies have classified poverty into two on the degree of its effect on victims: (i) extreme poverty and (ii) relative poverty. Extreme poverty, which is also known as destitution or absolute poverty refers to lack of basic human needs and which makes life miserable and repugnant, exposing sufferers to untold dangers, hunger, insecurity, sufferings and ultimately

untimely death. On the other hand, relative poverty is the condition of having fewer resources than others within a society, compared to worldwide averages (Okonofua, 2003).

In any given society, albeit on differing degrees, the pervasiveness of poverty is attributed to scarcely available and unevenly distributed resources around the world (Okonofua, 2003). Thus, more than one-fifth of humanity still lives in acute poverty (World Development Report, 1999:29). The argument is that if the scarcely available resources are evenly spread, much of world's poverty would be significantly reduced. On a global consideration, the world's poorest people live in developing areas of Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe.

As stated earlier, although there is yet a generally acceptable definition within which the phenomenon of poverty could be explained, existing documentations on poverty studies have, however, established a number of factors responsible for the endemic nature of the menace including overpopulation, inequitable distribution of factors of production, high rate of unemployment, poor atmosphere for wealth creation, environmental degradation, and poor welfare incentives.

Poverty has far-reaching devastating effect on a society and its people, including malnutrition, protracted health problems, starvation, inability to accomplish potential goals, unregulated demography, underutilisation of human and capital potentials, among others. Poverty is a detestable and undesirable social phenomenon. It makes you a seemingly inferior human being to an affluent fellow who is not naturally super human; it makes you unwillingly surrender your right when you are supposed to defend it; it makes you lose your self-worth and dignity when you are supposed to protect it; it creates wide gap between you and your economically advantaged fellow who is not ordinarily a higher being; it provokes your spirit to anger, petty jealousy and hate when you are supposed to rejoice, tolerate and love; and it condemns you to accepting defeat, thwarting your vision and dashing your hope of accomplishing your goals when you are supposed to summon courage and pursue your vision, get your goals accomplished and lead a fulfilled life. Poverty sets you into confusion about how to go about your life rather than being convinced about the next line of action at various stages of life.

In contemporary times, wars have sustained the culture of poverty. For instance, world wars I and II (1914- 1919; & 1939- 1945 respectively); the wars in Korea (1950- 1953); and the Vietnam war (1959- 1975), among others have damaged the ecosystem, inflicted diseases and influenza on the people, resulted in killings and displacements of persons, and prevented people from making a living (Okonofua, 2003:156).

Empirical analysis on poverty profile has also established the endemic nature of poverty in various parts of the world albeit with some measures of variation. For instance, absolute poverty no longer exists in Europe and North America, while poverty in absolute terms still persists in developing political economies especially Africa, and some parts of Asia and Latin America. In an attempt to accommodate the poor in the society, a number of political, ecumenical, humanitarian and institutional measures have been employed over the centuries. For instance, Babylonian, and early Christian writings have always entreated people with resources and good fortunes to extend hands of compassion and empathy to the needy. Following the evolution of modern states, relationships between the poor and the rich are being codified into legislation and violations

are challenged through legal and constitutional responses. Moreover, the present-day welfare systems of the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada are an offshoot of the 17th century British Legal Act known as 'the poor Law' (Okonofua, 2003:136).

Within the context of Africa, the prevalence of poverty, household vulnerability and inequality are fundamentally as a result of failure of the leadership to accelerate the pace of development without undue consideration for partisan disposition in governance.

Peace

On the surface value, the general notion about the phenomenon of peace is the absence of conflict. Put differently, peace is popularly considered as the absence of incompatible ideas in a relationship between or among individuals or groups. Such perceptions about what peace is supposed to mean are not only shallow, but could also be dangerously misleading. This is because the absence of open conflict between or among individuals or groups does not in itself provide the justification for peaceful co-existence, stable relationship and non-stressful interaction (Zanden, 1966).

The pertinent question then is what is peace? Existing body of literature in Peace Studies has not confirmed a generally acceptable definition of peace. This, among other reasons, is because there are as many opinions as possible about what peace means. Both those who accept the need for coercive force, including violence, and those who take a totally non-violent stance, and the many others with views in-between, would say they want peace. But their ideas about what peace really is are rather different. Johan Galtung, a foremost scholar in Peace Studies succinctly submits that 'peace is what we have when creative conflict transformation takes place non-violently' (Schmid, 2000:58).

The US Department of Justice sees peace as "a process of responding to diversity and conflict with tolerance, imagination, and flexibility; fully exercising one's responsibilities to ensure that all fully enjoy human rights (Schmid, 2000:58). In his own words, the seventeenth century philosopher, Baruch Spinoza submits that "peace is not an absence of war; it is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence and justice" (cited in Hauss, 2010:17). On his own part, Zempel (1996) conceptualizes peace as 'a process pattern of the international system characterized by a tendency towards the preservation of individual existence on the basis of declining violence and the continuation of individual self-realization on the basis of increasingly equal distribution of development chances'. Padilla (1994:22) cited in Cheldelin *et al.*, (2003:280) submits that:

Without social development (education, health, housing, work), economic development (growth, employment, productivity), political development (freedom, democracy, respect for human rights, participation); cultural development (national and ethnic identity, respect for the cultural rights of the indigenous peoples, science and technology, fine arts) it is not possible to establish the conditions of a lasting peace.

What could be deduced from the foregoing is that a society cannot be said to be peaceful merely in an atmosphere devoid of physical violence, while the root and structural causes of conflict have not been constructively addressed. In other words, true peace is equated with social justice- a situation in which peace is not measured by mere cessation of violent conflict but also by addressing the political, socio-economic inequalities, which gave rise to the conflict in the first place.

The foregoing further suggests that peace is a process; a many-sided, never-ending struggle to transform violence through people-based development processes (Fisher *et al*, 2000). Therefore, to achieve stable peace, state and non-state actors must find ways to promote an atmosphere of sustainable social harmony and tranquility not necessarily by anticipating a world totally free from non-violent conflict but by designing life-enhancing strategies and initiatives for solving the problems that could incite violence so that people no longer consider it an option, because it is no longer needed (Haus, 2010). The prerequisite for, or bedrock of durable peace, or what John Finnis (1996) calls 'true peace' is justice. By justice is meant the display a sense of fairness, truthfulness, empathy, dignity, equity, openness, sincerity of purpose, sound judgment, and such other virtues and values that promote social coherence in the way people are treated and in the way decisions are made. Perhaps, that is why John Finnis succinctly posits that 'justice removes obstacles to peace — and the direct source of peace is love of neighbour'.

According to Nwolise (2009: 251-252) peace is:

a human associational situation so saturated with the ingredients of justice, social equity, popular law, due process, tranquility, order, positive social values, and virtues that the pathogens of oppression, tension, hostility, mistrust, suspicion, and violence are neutralised in favour of freedom, relax feeling of mutual confidence, understanding, concord, friendship, co-operation, and collaboration.

Hence, it could be submitted that peace is a dynamic social process in which justice, equity and respect for the dignity of man prevail, and in which systemic violence (both physical and structural) is steadily neutralized through creative cultural, socioeconomic, political and institutional responses by stakeholders.

Development

Development has remained a nebulous phenomenon, often used interchangeably with related terms such as progress, growth, improvement and reduction in inequality. Nevertheless, certain distinguishing characteristics determine the distinct nature of development both in theoretical and practical terms. World Development Report (WDR) (1992) sees development as improving the well-being of people as it tends to raise their living standards and improve equality of opportunity across all strata of the population within a given political society.

According to Akokpari (2009:412) early ideas about development were hugely influenced by the modernization orthodoxy. He notes that Rostow's (1960) stage theory depicts societies as passing through distinct phases – primitive stage, pre-take-off, take-off, drive to maturity, and the stage of high mass consumption to development was one of the remotest attempts to

explain development within the context of modernization (Akokpari, 2009:412). The central argument of modernization theory is that the transition from one stage to another was facilitated by free trade, which constitutes a veritable path to growth and development. Orthodox line of exploration specifically conceived development in economic terms, using conventional measures of economic activities such as GDP, GNP, inflation, and balance of payments as indicators of social welfare (World Bank Report, 1992; Akokpari, 2009). This orthodox perception on development has continued to influence the thinking of development institutions including the World Bank and other regional socioeconomic institutions. Thus, in its 1991 'World Development Report', the World Bank submits categorically that 'the industrial countries of today grew prosperous through trade. Hence, no efforts should be spared to ensure that developing countries can follow that same path to development'. However, the assumption that free trade was seen as the main catalyst for development came under heavy criticism from the late 1960s by radical economists including Frank (1967), Amin (1976) and Bagchi (1975), following the failure of free trade to generate development in Latin America and much of the third world.

A paradigm shift is emerging in the perception of development which views development not merely from economic terms but from holistic problem-solving line of exploration as it is said to imply creative responses to social, political and economic affairs, including ecological and human security concerns. Perhaps, it is on this note that Babawale (2007:14) convincingly argues that development must involve two basic processes: first improving and refining that which is already in existence and adapting it to contemporary requirements; and second, finding solutions to the new problems or new forms of solutions to old problems. Put succinctly, sustainable development requires the present generations to take account of the full range of physical, human and natural capital that will determine their welfare and their bequests to their successors (WDR, 1992:34).

It is within this all-encompassing thinking about development that the phenomenon of sustainable development was conceived as it suggests an enduring, remarkable, non-terminal improvement in the quality of life, standard of living and life chances of the people (Babawale, 2007:14). In other words, sustainable development is the development that lasts as the exploitation of human and material resources guarantee the quality of life for the present generation without compromising or frustrating the survival of the coming generation. This explains sustainable development as a social process of change and continuity in which the prospects of incoming generations are not compromised or jeopardised. Thus Babawale (2007:14) submits that sustainable development can be defined as:

a deliberate and systematic policy of ensuring the survival of a state in such conditions that social, economic and political necessities that are imperative for the enjoyment of the good life and ensuring the greatest good for the greatest numbers are available now without this constituting a denial of the capacity of being able to enjoy the same benefits to generations yet unborn in the foreseeable future...

What could be deduced from the foregoing is that a society and its people can be said to experience sustainable development when the present generation are able to maintain harmony between change and continuity by responding productively and creatively to political, social and economic challenges confronting them without blocking the chances of the coming generations to do same.

Development is worth its salt when there are valid indicators of improved conditions of living in the lives of people in a given society, arising from improved governance system and research-based policy choices: poverty reduction, qualitative and quantitative health delivery, productive education, life-support social schemes, ecological security, improved infrastructures and social amenities, technological advancement and vibrant economy.

With specific reference to Africa, international communities and institutions have engaged in assisting the continent in terms of grants, aids and long-term credit facilities with the primary purpose of providing development opportunities. As Brien and Ryan (2001:471-472) put it, the primary motivation for which African countries enjoy aid flows could be expressed in various aspects of sustainable development, namely:

Developmental (to promote economic growth and poverty alleviation in poor countries); commercial (to cement commercial and financial relations with the aid recipient, open markets, and ensure opportunities for investors, contractors, and suppliers from the aid-giving country); and political (to maintain the allegiance of governments that are politically aligned with the donor, an especially prominent feature of aid and relationships during the cold war era).

However, the quantity of aid flows and other foreign support initiatives enjoyed by Africa have not commensurably translated to improved quality of life of Africans due to pervasive corruption, lack of accountability in governance, enduring leadership failure, poor policy formulation and implementation, undemocratic tendencies, and lack of continuity in governance arising from regime change, among others.

Causes of Poverty in Africa

The endemic nature of poverty in Africa, both in absolute terms and in comparison with other developing countries across the globe, especially Asia and Latin America, can be attributed to several factors. Among those factors as noted by Malaquias (2009:392) include direct colonial rules which transformed and complicated the development of Africa's own models of organising its politics and economies with indigenous colouration. Although the endemic poverty plaguing Africa in its post-colonial epoch cannot be holistically blamed on colonial legacy, the fact however remains that colonialism has its own share of the blame. For instance, as long as they dominated Africa's political arena, imperial powers did not set the pace for the continent to engage in productive indigenous economy or to compete evenly with other parts of the world at the mainstream of global political economy. As Malaquias (2009) observes, the colonial encounter, thus forced Africans to adapt foreign political and economic systems without determining the possibility of its productive outcome on the continent. Thus weakened in the clash with colonialism,

Africa lost its great variety of political and economic forms and was forced into a position where it could only contribute to the development of its exploiters (Malaquias, 2009:392). Consequently, Malaquias laments:

... Africa emerged from colonial era severely weakened both internally and vis-à-vis the rest of the world in many respects — colonialism not only humiliated Africans and exploited their resources, it also set the stage for Africa's enduring underdevelopment by establishing essentially anti-developmental social, economic and political structures in the colonies while simultaneously setting up inherently unequal relationships between Africa and the rest of the world. Such rigidly unequal relationships, especially regarding global terms of trade, constitute an important impediment to Africa's development.

At best what the imperial powers succeeded in doing was to design template that could facilitate mere evidence of growth at the expense of measurable all round development. The outcome of this developmental retardation has been untold poverty inflicting Africans in post-colonial era.

Another factor responsible for endemic poverty in sub-Saharan Africa is the poor performance of economic policies, illustrated by inadequate distribution of income and expenditure, low savings and investment ratios, absence from market economy, insufficient emphasis on the role of women in national development processes, the limited impact of export sectors, failed regional integration initiatives, and the debt crisis (Kankwenda *et al*, 2000). Another major indicator of failed economic policies is the pathological corruption expressed in outrageous capital flight and other dimensions of gross financial indiscipline on the part of African leaders. All these have had devastating consequences on the domestic economic situations.

In a related development, as the fast-growing population continues to exert strong pressure on employment opportunities across the continent in both rural and urban areas, successive governments have failed to design effective responsive measures arising from poor commitment of human and material resources to wealth creation and equitable governance system. In the past three decades, Africa's capacity to absorb labour has therefore declined mainly because of retarded economic growth. On that note, with the exception of South Africa and Botswana, Africa suffers from various handicaps that are an obstacle to the development of sound financial systems: low credit-worthiness, undiversified capital markets, the exclusion of key economic sectors from credit and other financial services, insufficient, oligopolistic practices in banking markets, and the general fragility of banks and other financial institutions (Devarajah, *et al.*, 2000). These problems have deepened poverty indices, which have retarded development at measurable terms, making durable peace relatively elusive on the continent.

Another major factor that has continued to deepen the phenomenon of poverty in Africa is demographic trends. Empirical analysis has shown that Africa has the highest growth rate among all the developing regions without commensurable economic growth and effective social policy responses (Kankwenda, *et al.*, 2000; Okonofua, 2003; devarajah, *et al.*, 2001). Over several periods, population growth on the continent has not been commensurate with economic

growth, thereby jeopardising the conditions for good life and social inclusion. As kankwenda *et al* (2000) observe, rapid population growth in Africa with its corollary of mass rural-urban migration has contributed to a labour market characterised by chronic excess supply of labour. Sequel to that, the difficulty of finding paid employment has swelled the ranks of the poor in urban centres, which has invariably made access to education at all levels extremely limited, thereby promoting crime rates and other forms of security-threatening social vices among youths.

In addition to the foregoing, the endemic internal conflicts have exacerbated poverty in Africa. Within the context of post-cold war era, constant internal conflicts are commonly referred to as 'new wars' in emerging literature in Peace Studies (Bellamy & Williams, 2012). New wars in Africa typically constitute protracted violent internal conflicts of ethno-religious, political, communal and socioeconomic causation (Bellamy & Williams, 2012), consequent upon which over 12 million refugees and internally displaced persons are on the continent (Hoogvelt, 2002:15). For instance, since independence, indiscriminate competition for political power and control of resources have plunged many African countries into strife, violence, civil war, and of recent, domestic terrorism. Former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, while delivering his political report on Africa in 1998 confirmed that in 1996 alone, 14 out of 53 African countries had been afflicted by armed conflict and that over 30 wars had occurred in Africa since 1970, mostly within states, counting for more than half of all war-related deaths world-wide in that period (Hoogvelt, 2002:15). Indeed, of the 53 member states of the African Union (AU), only six – Botswana, Mauritius, Malawi, Namibia, Tanzania, and post-Apartheid South Africa – have been exempted from intractable internal strife and civil war (ACDESS, 2005:1). Thus in many parts of the continent, endemic transnational conflicts, apart from causing enormous destruction to lives and property, have aggravated low level of capacity-building and wealth creation arising from weak technological base and often self-inflicted fragility of socio-political institutions, all of which have invariably exacerbated untold human misery (Akeju, Bristol, Dipeolu and Soetan, 1991, 225).

Given the protracted nature of internal conflicts in Africa, therefore, an enabling atmosphere for enduring peace, security and political stability has remained elusive. Thus an attempt to address poverty in Africa will remain an exercise in futility unless and until effective, problem-solving political, constitutional, legislative and socioeconomic responses are designed to stem the tide of endemic internal conflicts on the continent.

Pathological Poverty in Africa: Implications for Peace and Development

Among the most hotly contested issues in the debate on post-cold war Africa is its developmental challenges, including the ways in which it has impacted on the living conditions of the people and the attendant implications for consolidated peace and security. The argument in this study is that pervasive poverty has remained at the centre of development debate on the continent because it represents both the cause and effect of developmental impediment across the continent.

The magnitude and complexity of endemic poverty in Africa and the devastating threat it poses on socioeconomic, political and security situations make it one of the most deadly challenges

facing the continent and its people at the end of the last century and into the 21st century (Kankwenda *et al.*, 2000). Considering the fact that Africa is a depository of ample human and natural resources, prevailing political opinions, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, held that Africa's freedom from colonial imperialism would translate to the accomplishment of long awaited political stability and economic viability, and with the intent of improving the standard of living of the citizenry (Malaquias, 2009). In the thinking of most African leaders, since Africa was neither densely populated nor resource-poor like most parts of Asia, major gains would be made to quickly reduce the developmental gap that separated it from industrialised economies in Europe and North America (Malaquias, 2009).

However, as African states continued to gain independence from their respective erstwhile imperial powers, political freedom did not automatically bring about the necessary conditions for improving the lot of the continent and its people (Kambwa, Casimiro, Pedro, & Ngonda, 1999). Research-based global comparative analysis shows that currently, African countries are over-represented at the bottom of the United Nations Development programme's (UNDP) Human development index, occupying the last 21 spots (Malaquias, 2009). Of the 36 countries in the "low human development" category, 29 are in Africa (UNDP, 2004: cited in Malaquias, 2009). On that note, Africa's plight has continued to worsen while the gap that separates it from the rest of the world continues to widen. What is more, due to hostile nature of Africa's socioeconomic atmosphere, various adopted development strategies that were originally meant to facilitate domestic economic policies had rather impacted negatively on Africa's development process by inflicting a damaging influence on domestic economies. Sequel to that, some people have had no option than to devise variety of social vices as coping strategies. For instance, the unbearable prevailing socioeconomic conditions on the continent has compelled many women and young girls including minors into "survival sex" – i.e. offering sexual favour in return for food, shelter, monetary gains or/and any other forms of socioeconomic and political benefits in order to procure coping strategies for themselves and members of their families (Bellamy *et al.*, 2012: 359-379). Indeed, these categories of women who trade sexual exploitation for survival are unwilling to jeopardise the act for fear of unknown. This undesirable commercial sex work has invariably resulted in a steady rise in the sex trafficking industry and related dimensions of sexual exploitation, resulting in unprecedented spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Looked at from regional comparative perspective, Africa has the largest proportion of people living in extreme poverty. More than 300 million live on less than 1 dollar per day (Malaquias, 2009). This has constituted terrible development challenges on the continent as its people are logically deprived of access to basic needs that make life worth living - food, shelter, health care, clothing, and so on– both in quantitative and qualitative terms, let alone the possibility of self-empowerment through micro-finance income generation schemes.

Moreover, the phenomenon of poverty on the continent has remained one of the major reasons Africans migrate in droves to other parts of the globe in search of avenue for economic empowerment since their respective home fronts are not conducive for leading meaningful life. This development has undermined the sense of identity of Africans in Diaspora as the vast majority of them have acquired second citizenships at the expense of their countries of origin.

Onwudiwe (2006: 16) laments that it is so frustrating that many skilled Nigerians, **and by extension Africans** must leave home for their extended families to live, even though they should stay home for their countries to move forward (**emphasis added**).

Apart from voluntary migration in search of economic empowerment and social comfort, poverty constitutes one of the foremost factors responsible for Africa's production of refugees and other dimensions of human displacement. The opinion of Osaghae (2003: 5) on this is quite enriching:

through violent conflicts, — economic decline, poverty, **and** political instability
— Africa has contributed and continues to contribute more than a fair share to the world's refugee and humanitarian crisis (**emphasis added**).

Thus, while many countries around the world, especially in Asia are quickly and confidently 'catching up' with the industrialized nations, most African countries are sputtering forward in slow motion while a few have thrust their engines into reverse, unable to create the basic conditions for good governance in political and economic domains and generating both domestic and regional instabilities (Malaquias, 2009:394).

It is worth-noting that while developmental impasse in Africa has aggravated the shackle of poverty, poverty itself has compounded the crisis of underdevelopment on the continent over the years. Abd El-Hai *et al* (2009: 256) highlight how poverty and the attendant endemic disease affect productivity and development thus: (1) weakness of the sick employee and he has to stay at home; (2) one member of his family has to take care of him so he or she also stops working (3) low productivity of the sick employee and (4) death.

What this suggests, therefore, is that an attempt to transcend developmental retardation in Africa requires concerted efforts towards the eradication of poverty, inequality and social exclusion plaguing the continent and its people. It is therefore imperative for African leaders to commit human and material resources to designing and implementing initiatives for sustainable development in order to ensure enduring peace and security in Africa.

It is imperative to stress that Africa's plight will continue to worsen while the gap that separates it from the rest of the world will continue to widen unless Africa's developmental process is viewed as a complex multilayered perspectives and its helmsmen muster the political will and dedicate the bulk of available resources to create stable politics and a strong, productive poverty-alleviating economic initiatives.

Seers' (1972) question, cited in Akokpari (2009:413-414) about development cannot be set aside if the continent's quest for peace and tranquillity and political stability is to become a reality:

The (central) questions to ask about a country's development are ... what has been happening to poverty? ... to unemployment? (and) to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt, this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result development even if per capita income doubled.

On that note Akokpari (2009:414) argues convincingly that Seers' perception captures the essentials of the type of development required in Africa "development that does not merely focus on growth figures, but addresses the practical every day concerns of the people – one that emphasizes human security as well as the empowerment of deprived and marginalized communities". Unfortunately, Akokpari (2009) laments aloud, it is sad that poverty, unemployment, inequalities, along with diseases, conflicts, genocide, and environmental decadence are among the leading tormentors of African societies.

What this suggests in plain language is that development, in the real sense of the phenomenon, has continued to elude post cold-war independent African states, hence, the logical explanation for the prevalence of poverty, diseases, internal wrangling, inequality, political instability, lawlessness and indiscipline on the continent. Thus, as indicated earlier, under conditions of political, economic, and social insecurity, which development impasse has caused over the years, people with skills have migrated to other stable and affluent parts of the world other than Africa. And in the process, another dimension of developmental impasse evolves as massive migration of human resources (especially skilled labour) outside Africa, resulting in brain drain in their various countries of origin. The popular destinations of skills from various parts of Africa have been France, Belgium, Canada, the United Kingdom, United States, Australia, New Zealand, in the western hemisphere (Akokpari, 2009:421); and recently Japan, China and few others in the Asian topography.

The serious developmental crisis confronting independent African states becomes compounded by corrupt practices and sheer acts of mis-governance, resulting in the absence of the 'empirical realities' of statehood from many African societies even after the so-called illegitimate colonial imperial forces had relinquished power. As Dixon (2002:63) puts it:

Many African states are 'ruled' by corrupt and inefficient elites, possess feeble and ineffectual state institutions and remain weakened by vast ethnic and cultural heterogeneity

Another scholar, George Ayittey, cited in Dixcon (2002) argues that Africa's current frailty can largely be located within bad leadership, corruption, economic mismanagement, (and) political tyranny of African states.

Lamenting on the devastating consequences of corruption in Nigeria as Africa's microcosm, formal Vice-President of the World Bank, Dr. Obi Esekwesili, stresses that despite earning more than 600 billion dollars in the last 13 years, the federal government had been unable to improve the lot of ordinary Nigerians. She stressed further that even though Nigeria is not experiencing a total internal war, Nigerians did not fare better than citizens of war-torn nations like Afghanistan or less potentially endowed nations like Chad. She notes that Nigeria is presently engaged in systemic corruption with no appreciable corrective measures on the part of the government, which has made the country to be ranked 32nd among countries with high corruption index (*The Punch*, March 7, 2014 p. 8). The lesson here is that bad governance epitomized in corruption and display of illegality with impunity on the part of the political elite has done untold damage on the developmental process of independent African states, which has invariably compounded poverty and made durable peace elusive on the continent.

Development will continue to elude Africa unless African leaders endeavour to change their behavioural pattern and commit themselves in totality to service delivery in the interest of political stability and viable economy. Such an atmosphere of internal economic reformation is all the more imperative considering the fact that Africa's quest to meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) cannot become a reality unless developmental issues are addressed in the direction of poverty eradication. The growing conviction among many African thinkers and policy advisers today is that Africa's crisis is Africa's fault (Hooggrelt, 2002). Hence the desire to seek African solution to Africa's problems, particularly in the area of tackling developmental challenges for the central purpose of addressing poverty and inequality is in the hands of Africans.

Conclusion

This study has analyzed the nexus between the phenomenon of poverty and growing incident of development impediments confronting Africa, which has invariably made consolidated peace a wishful thinking on the continent even despite its physical, human and natural resource endowments. In other words, this study has revealed that the availability of untapped human, material and physical resources is not a guarantee for development. Hence, all those are not an indication of poverty eradication, or at least poverty alleviation, which is central to the sustenance of desired peace, and harmony and tranquillity. Rather, Africa's quest for consolidated peace and sustainable development would be realistic if the custodians of state power are committed to purpose-driven socio-economic and political activities. These include but not limited to: the promotion of economic and social well-being of the citizenry; enhancement of people's image and status in relatively encouraging comparison to others across the globe; respect for the rule of law and fundamental human rights; mutual respect among peoples across cultural diversity; irrevocable commitment to the elimination of social exclusion, political deprivation and economic marginalization; commitment to the promotion of human security and environmental safety; and redressing the imbalances in internal power structure on the basis of ethnicity and religious enclave. This will organically reduce poverty through employment opportunities, wealth creation, civil liberty and an enabling atmosphere for capacity-building and skill acquisition.

Recommendations

During the period of the Great Depression in the 1930s Europe, the Great British economist John Maynard Keynes wrote of the "economic possibilities for our Grandchildren" and envisioned the end of poverty at a time of duress and suffering in Great Britain and other industrial economies toward the end of the 20th century. Keynes' argument was that innovations in science and technology and the attendant revolution in industrial sector would result in consistent economic growth that would make extreme poverty non-existent in advanced countries (Sachs, 2005).

African leaders can learn from Keynes' bright vision and make the end of extreme poverty a reality on the continent in the 21st century by evolving an enabling atmosphere for productive education, stable polity, vibrant economy, and research-based social policy responses to the myriad socioeconomic and human security challenges confronting the continent. On that note, the following specific recommendations are made with a view to ensuring some possibilities of

reversing the colossal developmental deficiency ravaging the continent and denying it sustainable peace in its post-colonial epoch.

- **Renovation of Africa's governance process:** There is no gain saying the fact that poverty, inequality and governance are inseparably related because poverty and inequality can further render a deficient governance system vulnerable. Since science and reason have not established the possibility of a magic wand for development, African potential for sustainable peace and development is inherent in restructuring the governance process and political formations by the political elite. The optimism of improved living standards that political independence seemed to represent could not be realistic in the face of chronic developmental deficiency informed by corrupt practices and other dimensions of mis-governance with which post-independence Africa leadership is characterized.
- **The need to design Africa's developmental strategies and initiatives within the context of Africa's indigenous model.** Africa's great potential remains unrealized and the promise of independence remains unfulfilled partly because African leaders have failed to give consideration for indigenous instruments in the design of models for maximizing Africa's economic and political potentials. Although the colonial legacies, such as the artificiality of the post-colonial nation-states, are important to understand Africa's persistent socio-economic and political challenges, its inability to insulate itself from development deficiency has much to do with the fact that the continent has been trapped in theoretical and policy frameworks of foreign extraction. Hence, the need to develop a new development paradigm for Africa by harmonizing indigenous model with the Western developmental paradigm becomes imperative as it remains the most effective instrument for reducing poverty and social exclusion on the continent.
- **Productive education:** Education has been identified, as, and has always remained the most potent instrument for tackling poverty. In that regard, government in various independent African countries must ensure that their policy choices and governance strategies function in favour of ensuring productive education for the people with a view to liberating their minds from intellectual poverty.

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