

GLOBALIZATION AND DEEPENING RURAL POVERTY IN CONTEMPORARY SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

In recent time, especially in the last decade the issue of globalization and economic integration of world countries has been the aspiration of many nation states, including those in Africa. But various governments and organizations have not thought deeply about the social impact of this world phenomenal trend irrespective of its envisaged economic gains. Having a view of Africa and the rest of the world in respect to globalization trend it is important to examine how globalization impacts on African people's quality of life and poverty situation. Against this background this paper examines the interface between globalization phenomenon and deepening rural poverty situation in Africa. The basic assumption behind this submission is that embracing the globalization phenomenon contributes negatively in the economic development and quality of life of Africans, especially those in the rural areas via the dislocation of indigenous cultural and other practices that have sustained the base structure of the people. The paper therefore, presents the theoretical conceptualization of rural poverty in Africa, characteristics and nature of the rural poor in Africa, rural poverty situation in Africa, with emphasis from Nigeria. It also explores the phenomenon of globalization and other causal processes of rural poverty in Africa, its relationship with indigenous cultural and technological practices, and consequently the impact of the interaction between them on the poverty situation or quality of life of African people. This paper concludes that globalization deepens rather than alleviates the poverty situation of rural Africans. It is therefore, recommended that African rural population should be deliberately protected through economic and cultural policies to prevent the eroding and disruptive force of globalization.

Introduction

In contemporary Africa, the issue of dwindling economic situation and low quality of life of the people in the continent is widespread. The question has been, whether African societies were poor before colonialism or after colonialism that poverty situation was initiated into the continent. Obviously this question is to be addressed by understanding what poverty as a concept implies and who are the poor? The conventional definition of the poor refers to all those persons who subsist below a given level of income usually below \$1 per day by international standard. The poverty line is often taken to mean access to purchasing power sufficient to cover the cost of nutritionally adequate diet. However a variation of this view maintains that poverty should be determined on the basis of nutritional norm. By this conceptualisation, the undernourished are poor people regardless of whether their lack of access to their nutritional requirement is a consequence of low income, low consumption or other factors (Lipton, 1988). In brief, the distinction between the poor and the non-poor based on income/nutrition is debatable, first because what constitutes the poverty line as well as the criteria defining income distribution are often contested, and second because nutritional norms are imprecise and thus improper tools of measurement. Despite the above, both the poverty line and nutritional approaches hide differential levels of vulnerability within the household, since both tacitly assume that the pooling of income and consumption of goods within the household ensures that the burden of hardship is equally shared (Kabeer, 1991). Apart from the income and consumption conceptualization, the poor have also been identified as those with low asset base, which translates to insufficient land, livestock possession, capital accumulation and low earned income due to limited employment opportunities (Saith, 1990). Although these conceptualizations are somewhat limited, there is no definite, accurate and singular valid standard measurement to determine who is poor and who is not, since in each case environmental factors, and other factors such as those having to do with agricultural experience and human initiative tend to be left out of account (Rahmato 1992).

From a more general sense, poverty connotes a state in which resources, usually material but sometimes cultural, are lacking. It has to do with deprivation, and inequality. There are aspects of poverty, which are not material, such as poverty of idea and poverty of values, and cultural norms, which are non-measurable in quantifiable term. Whichever way that poverty and the definition of the poor is conceived, it is widely acclaimed that African societies are poor when compared to what obtains in other continents. For instance, we know that African countries make up more than half of the world's gazetted poorest countries, the standard measure being an income level of \$US1 per day. Having this acclamation has not really helped any deep thought about what the condition in the rural Africa is like. Understanding poverty or discussing poverty in Africa without linking it up or paying greater attention to the rural population leaves out a lot to be known and shared. This is because majority of Africans live in the rural areas, and agrarian in nature. In Nigeria for instance, more than 65% of her people live in the rural areas. In spite of this, discussions and debates about poverty in the continent have revolved round issues of urban poor, as it is the case in other countries of the world.

Following the above observation and the need to bring the context of rural poverty in African societies to the fore, this paper becomes a piece, subject to debate and deliberations at this moment of our development, especially in the face of the globalization trend where African societies are nakedly exposed without adequate preparation. This paper therefore, discusses the poverty situation in African societies and the impact of globalization and

internationalization in deepening the situation. This is done by conceptualizing poverty in theoretical terms as regards African societies, characterizing rural African poor, and the interface with globalization.

Theoretical Conceptualization of Rural Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa

Similar to what obtains in other countries and continents of the world, conceptualization of poverty in Africa is not very different. What however, may differ are the contexts and descriptions, which vary according to societies, cultures, and environment. Poverty is conceptualized in Africa as either absolute, relative, or even structural in nature.

Absolute Poverty

Poverty, conceptualized in absolute terms, refers to a state in which an individual or society lacks the necessary resources for subsistence. McNamara (1978), argued that a condition of life where there is malnutrition, illiteracy, diseases, squalid surroundings, high infant mortality, and low life expectancy as to be beneath, and reasonable deficiency of human decency is absolute poverty. These mark most African societies, both urban and rural, although what obtains in the rural areas is generally higher in indices. African rural societies especially live in near total deprivation of certain basic necessities of life, including food. There are insights into what poverty situation in dominant agricultural economy are (Ajakaiye and Adeyeye, 2001). Their studies revealed that the poor in the agrarian economy:

- Live in communities served by bad roads, inadequate water supply, and education and electricity services.
- Have small farm hold and mainly grow food crops for their own consumption.
- Family labour is their main source of farm labour and they may have to work as paid labourers for others to earn income.
- Have few or no cash crops and are highly vulnerable to pledging the little they have as security against debts.
- Have food insecurity before harvest and their food is mainly starch dominated.
- Have limited access to savings and credit and rarely have valuable assets such as highly estimated house.
- Have high prevalence of diseases
- Do not have access to agricultural input
- Cannot afford their children's school fees, and have high incidence of school dropouts.
- Exhibit gender gaps arising from unequal access to productive assets, cultural hindrance, etc. International Journal of Development and Management Review (INJODEMAR) Vol. 6 June, 2011

These are lacking in the lives of most African individuals and communities, which translate to a state of absolute poverty. This is so because it involves a judgment of basic human needs and is measured in terms of the resources required to maintain health and physical efficiency. The assumption also is that there are minimum basic needs for all people in all societies.

Relative Poverty

Quite different from absolute poverty, relative poverty is on the contrary measured in terms of judgments by members of a particular society of what is considered as reasonable and acceptable standard of living and style of life according to the conditions of the day

(Fields, 1988). Individuals in African societies can then be seen as poor when their resources are so seriously below the average, when compared with that of other members of the society. This becomes clearer and obvious when one looks at the poverty situation in urban and rural societies in Africa. The conclusion drawn most often is that rural Africa is relatively poor, or there is relative poverty in rural areas of Africa. It is important to note that anthropologists favour relative definition and conceptualization of poverty because of the methodological bias towards comparison, which is one of the main cruxes of anthropological studies.

Structural Poverty

Structural poverty is a long-term poverty of individuals due to their personal and social circumstances, while conjectural poverty is temporary poverty into which ordinary self-sufficient people are thrown by crisis or particular circumstances (Lliffe 1987). African societies and members suffer from both structural and conjectural poverty. Structural in the sense that the poverty situation tends to be projected to last for a long time, taking into consideration the debt burden imposed on the society by their rulers and government. The debt overhang is excruciating and seems unending in a short time. Poverty in African societies in this regard is self-inflicted and sustained. On the other hand, African societies could also be seen as suffering from conjectural poverty. This assertion makes sense if one assumes that African societies have been well off before colonialism, and have been dragged into poverty because of their relationship with western societies. This could be the case because African societies were self-sufficient within their own standard before westernization. The introduction of various colonial policies in the last century and lately the globalization phenomenon stretches African societies into somewhat temporary situation that could be described as poverty, pending when the societies realize their condition, perhaps in the long run. From the foregoing description, rural poverty is a multivariate phenomenon in African societies in which economic and non-economic dimensions and a number of other socio-economic variables are relevant to its identification. The rural poor in Africa form an economically and socially heterogeneous group characterized by landlessness, tenancy, sharecropping, small peasant land holding, landless labourers, artisans and fishermen, hunters, women and other vulnerable groups (Sanginga 1995). These characteristics make struggle to survive the more central issue to the life of the rural poor in Africa (Dixon, 1993).

Rural poverty in Africa cannot be satisfactorily discussed without considering the more general question of inequality and social stratification, although the descriptive analysis and explanation of poverty therein should extend beyond the general theoretical underpinning of social stratification. This is because even though African societies are socially stratified, using stratification, as the major demand for analysis will obscure some other vital issues, unlike in the western societies that non-arguably exist under high stratification arrangement. The social category or the social class of the poor in rural Africa exist because of presence of unequal groups, competition for scarce resources, changes in value system and imposed status index, which are in most cases externally determined. For instance, how does one determine, and assertively conclude that an African rural dweller is poor or not poor when the American dollar is the datum or reference point? Is there any complete equivalent of dollar in the real sense of the word, even though there is exchange rate that provides an insight?

Major approaches to understanding and examining rural poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa

Sanginga (1995) buttressed the major approaches to understanding and examining rural poverty in Africa. These include, the Marxian, the physical and ecological approaches

(Dixon; 1993), the socio-economic approach, and Euro centric approach. From Marxian approach, rural poverty could be understood from the point of view of exploitation due to the capitalist economic structure that exists in the contemporary African nation states. Therefore state of being deprived or not having enough is an inevitable consequence of the emergent capitalist structure. In this case, wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few urban dwellers that own most means of production to the detriment of the rural inhabitants. The little productive activities of the rural dwellers (mostly agricultural produce) are low priced by the urban counterparts who act as the middlemen between them and the international market. In other words, rural Africans are exploited people who are perpetually weak and defenseless.

The physical and ecological approach posits a relationship between poor environment and poverty situation (Dixon, 1993). This approach focuses on the argument that Africans, especially those in the rural areas are poor because of shortage of environmental resources, poor environmental condition, and degradation, coupled with high population pressure where the available land cannot support meaningful existence of the human inhabitants. Poverty in this case is found where there are poor environmental conditions in Africa. For instance in Nigeria, poor people are widely spread all over the country but more concentrated in the overpopulated zones of the South-East and in the drought prone areas of the northern part of the country (Sanginga 1995). Generally, in much of sub-Saharan Africa, a convincing argument for a large environmental contribution to rural poverty can be made and substantiated, leading to a conclusion that poor environment leads to poor condition of living and low quality of life.

The political economy approach sees the root cause of poverty in the distribution of wealth in African societies. The main crux of this view, which is similar to the Marxian point of argument, is that poverty in the rural Africa is a result of processes which concentrate power on *what you have*, therefore the *have-nots*, mainly the rural dwellers end up being excluded in the social and economic arrangement. The processes that are impacting and perpetuating the rural poverty situation operate from within African societies themselves, and international community. What ever be the case, the basic understanding is that the rural Africans are often at the receiving end in the international economic power play.

Some emerging theoretical explanations towards understanding of rural poverty in Africa are seemingly Euro centric in their analysis. The major argument from this school of thought is that rural poverty in Africa could be firmly pinned to the nature of rural societies. This approach lays much emphasis on the ways in which traditions; values and practices of rural societies induce and perpetuate their *backwardness* and poverty condition. Rural poverty is then depicted as self-inflicted condition where individuals, families, and communities were poor because of idleness, unwise expenditure, incompetence, traditions, ignorance, and even lack of intelligence (Dixon, 1993). Rural people were frequently been described as not acting rationally, failing to respond to market forces, innately conservative, stupid and responsible for their poor condition. However, the fallacy of this chauvinistic argument has been documented as overtly racist explanation, anchored on blaming the victim.

Following these arguments, especially the last Euro centric explanation of rural poverty in Africa, one may then ask a few questions, (1) can we say that rural poverty in Africa is as a result of deprivation and exploitation? (2) Are rural people poor because they are un-intelligent and or irrational? (3) Where can we then situate rural poverty in contemporary African societies in recent time?

According to Sanginga (1995), the central model for understanding poverty in rural Africa is that in which colonization/urbanization are implicated, unequal exchange pattern between town and countryside, and between the rich and the rural poor. In this regard, rural poverty issues are more credibly presented as rural-urban imbalance as well as intra-rural dichotomy and differentiation. Rural poverty in this context could be explained with more objective theories of dependency, exploitation (Karl Marx), and development of underdevelopment (Olutayo, 1991). An examination of Walter Rodney's "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa" could also explain why African societies are poor and unable to meet the challenges of the globalizing world. Feldmann (1975) earlier identified the two themes in this ongoing argument which have developed through years. The first stresses the relationship of dependency between the colonial states and the imperialist countries, and the dependency between rural and urban societies in Africa.

Characteristics and Nature of the Rural Poor in Sub-Saharan Africa

In pursuance of understanding the nature of rural poor in Africa, there are some basic characteristics that are noticeable as the basic identities. In Africa therefore, the most vulnerable groups subject to poverty among the rural population belong to those that are small holder farmers (usually households with up to a certain size of crop land; 2 hectares in the Nigerian case), the landless (households without any cropland), nomadic pastoralists (households which are not settled in any specific area and which derive most of their income and consumption from pastoral livestock), ethnic indigenous populations (household described as such according to the land, statuses and customs of the country or recognized as such by the communities), small and artisan fishermen (household carrying out fishing activities using small, often non mechanized boats), displaced/refugee populations, and households headed by *de factor* or *de jure* by women (IFAD, 1993).

Being Landless

In Africa, of the main characteristic of rural poor or what one can use to identify the poor in the rural area is the state of being landless, which constitutes 11% of the population strictly speaking. Farmers that are landless in Africa are hired agricultural workers who do not rent, own or sharecrop any area of land. This group of people possess only their physical labour, power and skills acquired through experience and tradition. Also in this social category are other non-agricultural people who rely on employment opportunities in their non-industrial countryside. The poverty situation of this group consists not only in low agricultural wages, but also in the shortage of employment opportunities during the year. According to Sanginga (1995), they are particularly vulnerable to seasonal sacrifices, of both job and food.

Small Holding Farmland The second major feature is small holding farmland. This consists of groups of peasants who do not own enough land to grow food for family subsistence. Their poverty condition arises due to unequal allocation and distribution of available land, which are exacerbated by population pressure, and environmental degradation (Obioha and Olokesusi, 2007). In Africa, 73% of the rural population consists of smallholder farmers who have very limited resources base, as it is the case in Nigeria. In a more vivid description, they hold tiny plots of land and rely on non-farm sources for a significant part of their subsistence. They do not own cattle, use very small amount of inputs, and practice

simple techniques of production among others. About 40 -90% of small holding farmers fall below the poverty line, depending on the area of description.

Female headed household scenario

Another major feature of poverty in rural African is the female headed household scenario. Rural women in general and particularly the households, which they head, are often the most disadvantaged in African societies. They are the most vulnerable group of rural people, whose lives are marked by hardship, deprivation, and uncertainty. Rural women are the worst nourished, and illnesses are far more widespread among them than their men counterparts. The total number of rural women lumped below the poverty line in developing countries including those of Africa was estimated to be 564 million, (IFAD, 1993). In Africa, the number of households headed in the world representing 31%. About 55% of the female-headed households are in poverty with women constituting about 42% of the total poor. Looking deep into Africa, traditional biases, and practices result in poverty of women. In most societies in Africa, women have no right of inheritance on land. Besides, they are restricted and discriminated against in some economic considerations. This traditional background places women in disadvantaged position. The major question arising from the above observation which seems worthy is, is it possible for a discriminated widow who has no inheritance over land and some other valuables be able to cope with life issues and upkeep? The answer to this question is obviously no.

Exploring further on the characteristics of rural poverty in Africa, the descriptive methods illuminate the macro detail of rural poverty. This method, as utilized by anthropologists, tries to identify clusters of disadvantaged households. Five notable clusters of disadvantaged households are those that are poor, physically weak, isolated, vulnerable, and powerless (Chambers 1983: 109-111).

Poor asset

As Sanginga (1995:10) puts it, the household that is poor has few asset, with its hut, house or shelter being small, made of wood, bamboo, mud, grass, palm fronds or hides, and has little or no furniture. In relation to land, this type of household has no land, or even when there is land, the space available does not assure or barley assures subsistence on which is rented or sharecropped. It has no livestock, or has only small stock (hens, ducks, goats, and pig) or a few weak cattle. The family labour has low productivity, with little or no control over the means of production. However, its main asset, which is productive, is the labour of its members. In terms of stock, the households stocks and flows of food and cash are low, unreliable, seasonal and inadequate. Most times the household borrows from neighbours, kin and even traders to sustain their living.

Physically weak

Secondly, rural poor household is the type that is physically weak. Usually, there is a high ratio of dependents, including children, old people, sick, and handicapped to able-bodied adults for some reasons. One of which is that in most cases the household head is a woman, besides, the stage of the domestic cycle when there are small children not yet contributing economically. Other reasons include because adults have been permanently weakened, or disabled by accident or illness, or because of early death of other adults, or because active adults have dispersed or migrated to escape poverty. It is noted that such household is

seasonally hungry and thin, and its members weakened by interactions of parasite, sickness, and malnutrition. Pregnancy, birth and death are also common occurrences.

Isolated, vulnerable, and powerless

Apart from rural poor households being poor and weak, they are isolated. In Africa very poor people in the rural areas live in peripheral locations and areas that are remote from centers of trading, discussions, and information. This is true because if a household situates within the centre of most human activities in a community it will have access to other life benefits. Isolated households rarely have radios and other communication gadgets. Its children do not go to school, or attend school and drop out early. Members of such family or household rarely attend public meetings, even when they go, they do not speak for the sake of inferiority complex. In their agricultural practice, they do not reach out to receive advice from extension workers. Importantly, rural poor households in Africa are very vulnerable. The household has a few buffers against contingencies and disasters. Disasters and social demands such as crop failure, famine, hut burning down, an accident, sickness, funeral, dowry, bride price, wedding expenses have to be met by becoming poorer. In other words, poor households are not comfortable enough to meet some of their societal demands.

The foregoing exemplified some of the basic characteristics and features of rural poor in Africa. It is important at this juncture to depict a trend of rural poverty in a contemporary African society, Nigeria. What obtains in Nigeria however is the same experience of other African societies.

Rural Poverty Situation in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Nigeria Case

Poverty has been persistent in Nigeria. The incidence of poverty rose from 15% in 1974 to 35% in the urban areas and 40% in the rural areas in 1980 (ILO, 1981) which later rose to 43% in mid 1980s. In 1983/84 respective Gini Coefficients of all households in urban and rural Nigeria were 0.394 and 0.379. Corresponding figures for 1998 were 0.520 and 0.510 indicating worsening poverty situation (Ajakaiye and Adeyeye, 2001). Nigeria like other African countries has a significant number of her populations categorized as poor. For instance in 1992, 34.7 million people (one third of the entire population) were poor while 13.9 million were extremely poor (World Bank, 1996). The incidence of poverty has been increasing since 1980. Currently, Nigeria ranks 142nd in HDI index worldwide and ranks 40th among world's poorest countries (World Development Report, 1999).

The knowledge that Nigeria is among the world's poorest countries is not sufficient if the situation in the rural area is not revealed. However, intra country analysis shows that the poverty situation in the rural Nigeria is greater than what obtains in the urban area. Statistics confirms this by showing that 59% of urban households and 70% of rural households are poor. (Okumadewa, 2001). Table 1 shows that in 1980, 28.3% of the rural population was poor including the moderately poor and core poor. By 1985, the figure rose to 51.4%. Although the number of poor in the rural area declined to 46.0% in 1992 it later increased to an alarming rate of 69.8% in 1996. In terms of depth and severity, the rural areas were also worse off.

Table 1: Poverty incidence by Sectors/Location (urban/Rural) in %

Urban (Percent)				Rural (percent)		
Year	Non Poor	Moderately poor	Core Poor	Non Poor	Moderately poor	Core Poor
1980	82.8	14.2	3.0	71.7	21.8	6.5
1985	62.2	30.3	7.5	48.6	36.6	14.8
1992	62.5	26.8	10.7	54.0	30.2	15.8
1996	41.8	33.3	25.2	30.7	38.2	31.6

Sources: FOS “Poverty profile for Nigeria” 1980-1996, Okumadewa (2001)

Rural areas have largely been under served, neglected and exploited in terms of social and economic infrastructure. Ajakaiye and Adeyeye, (2001), Okumadewa, (2001) and FOS (1995; 1996) show the lopsided percentage distribution of dwelling units by type of water supply and households by toilet facilities. These studies indicate worsening scenario in the rural areas, and a more serious case for concern when compared with the urban sector. Another important measure of the extent of poverty in the rural areas is through examining the occupational distribution of household heads. Table 2 shows that between 1980, 1985, 1992, and 1996, there were more poor people and poverty in the agricultural sector than in any other sector.

Table 2: Poverty in Percent and Occupation of Household Heads

Poverty Headcount (Percent)				
Occupation of household Head	1980	1985	1992	1996
Professional/Technical	17.3	35.6	35.7	51.8
Administration	45.0	25.3	22.3	33.5
Clerical Related	10.0	29.1	34.4	60.1
Sales Workers	15.0	36.6	33.5	56.7
Service Industry	21.3	38.0	38.2	71.4
Agric and Forestry	31.5	53.5	47.9	71.0
Production Transport	23.2	46.6	40.8	65.8
Manufacture & Processing	12.4	31.7	33.2	49.4
Others	1.5	36.8	42.8	61.2
Students	15.6	40.5	41.8	52.4
All Nigeria	27.2	40.3	42.7	65.6

Sources: FOS “Poverty profile for Nigeria” 1980-1996, Okumadewa (2001)

The poor that are in agriculture are also basically residing in the rural area. Many of these poor people lack basic inputs and in most cases experienced decline growth in agricultural production and productivity. Available evidence from studies in 1991 showed that the rural areas had higher rates for health indicators such as infant mortality, malnutrition, and other disease prevalence. In education, percentage of children enrolled in both primary and secondary schools in the rural areas was less than in urban areas from 1990 up to 1996. Similarly, literacy rate was lower in the rural communities (Okumadewa, 2001; FOS 1995).

The poverty situation in the rural areas of Nigeria may not be very different from what happens in other African countries. Although one is not suggesting that there is no poverty in the urban areas of Africa, or who we call the ōurban poorö, but the focus on the rural areas stems from the fact that these group of people are both ideologically and spatially excluded and distanced. Snap shots from other African countries using one of the poverty indices would show deeper rate of poverty in the rural areas of these countries, more than in the urban sector. Theoretically, and empirically it is believed that every condition or process have causal process for it, therefore rural poverty in Africa could also be pinned within an ambit of causal process.

Globalization and Other Causal Process of Rural Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa

The explanation of rural poverty is multicentric. There is no single explanation to that in the case of African societies. In as much as there are some basic characteristics, there are also processes of influence in the phenomenon. In Africa some of these processes dating back to human history in the continent are colonialism, and international capitalism, uneven exchange or rural urban dualism, unchecked population growth and pressure, environmental degradation, marginalization and exclusion of women, internal political fragmentation, national policies, and international factors and programmes (Sanginga, 1995). Colonialism for instance as a root cause of poverty is predicated on the fact that social and economic differentiation began in a significant way during the colonial period. They introduced some fundamental changes in Africa by creating a group integrated with outside world producing for markets, and a group, which remained subsistence. On the whole therefore, the colonial rule in Africa meant significant differentiation with alienation of land for settlement in more fertile areas, the creation of a class of workers more or less dependent on wages. These created differentiation and a dualistic pattern of growth resulted in the impoverishment of the larger majority of rural population who remained outside the favoured group (IFAD, 1993:11). There is no gain echoing that other causal processes of rural poverty in Africa revolve round colonialism, and neo-colonialism. Even when one examines civil strife, civil wars, and ethnic factors in contemporary African societies, the external factors and masters have been the brain behind all the problems (Obioha, 2000). Ethnic conflicts in most cases bring about poverty as a result of induced stagnation in human productivity. The environmental problems that induce poverty in the rural areas are not self-inflicted; rather these problems are outcomes of colonial exploitation either directly by the colonial masters or their counterparts in our African societies. For instance in Nigeria, the Niger Delta Communities are poor because of the mineral oil exploitation in their environment. The exploration of petroleum in these communities is carried out by external bodies, which after the process leave the environment vulnerable to other natural disasters. As a result of the exploration the indigenous people experience frequent oil spillages that cause harm on their fauna and flora, most especially the aquatic lives. This situation therefore induces poverty on the people when they are no longer reaping the gains of their natural endowments.

The emergence of the new global trend ōglobalizationö also tends to solidify some of the effects of colonization in African societies. Globalization fosters integration of world societies, and communities, and eliminates all sorts of boundaries (economic, social, political, religious), if practicable. However, this phenomenon and process do not exist without being favourable, and unfavourable at the same time to different societies and communities. This brings us to one of the major assumptions of this paper that African societies have been at the

receiving end in the world globalization trend. The extent of this disadvantage on the rural population could better be described than imagined. The argument further stands on whether globalization alleviates or deepens rural poverty as the case relates to Africa.

Globalization and Rural Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa: Impacts and Implications

The world is now being conceived as a global village in which distances between national boundaries have been considerably reduced by technology and telecommunication. The emergent world economic and social trend can be referred to as a process that broadens and deepens linkages of national economies into worldwide market for goods, services and capital (Ohiorhennan, 1998, NISER, 2000:21). Globalization brings with it a fast growing tendency towards the universal homogenization of ideas, cultures, values and even lifestyles. One of its tenets is the open competition among world nations, as a result of which some countries are gaining while others are losing. In this regard, a critical view of what obtains in African societies especially in the rural areas in recent time depicts a declining rather than an increase in the economies and welfare of those communities. For instance, in Nigeria the GDP has been unimpressive since the adoption of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which is one of the recommendations of the unified economic order in the world. Between 1992 and 1997 the average growth rate had been 2.5% compared to a population growth rate of about 3%. The productive sectors that were expected to provide the engine of growth and provide employment opportunities have performed rather poorly. Moreover, infrastructure and social facilities have deteriorated drastically over the years, thus contributing to the widespread poverty experienced in the country (NISER, 2002).

FOS (1996) data show that the emergence of globalization has negative impact on the poverty situation of Nigerians generally, the rural dwellers inclusive. According to the statistics, about 27.2%, 42.8%, and 60% of Nigerians were estimated to be below the poverty line in 1980, 1985, and 1996 in that order. During 1980-1985, the estimated annual rate of increase in poverty is about 4%, but the situation got worse from 1992-1996 when the rate increased to 5.8%. In all the situations and circumstances shown above, there is an observed worsening of economic condition and other life expectations as the years progressed. This obviously implies that the economic situation and poverty conditions of people of Nigeria, likewise other African countries worsen as the new world phenomenon of 'globalization' gains ground. Before Nigerian government and people fully embraced globalization principle, the quality of life of people and infrastructure were not as worse as they are at present. The adverse economic condition obviously may be higher in the rural areas of the continent, because majority of them are in agriculture, which has been hardly hit by the globalization trend. It is important to note first and foremost at this juncture that the distribution of global gains have been greatly unequal. The average income in the richest 20 countries in the world is estimated to be 37 times the average of world's poorest 20 countries. This gap has been, and incidentally been doubled in the past 40 years (World Bank 2000/2001). World economic observation in recent time has shown that economic experience has however been diverse in different parts of the world. For instance, while the number of people living on less than \$1 a day fell from 420 million to 280 million between 1987 and 1998, in East Asia, the number of people has been rising in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and South Asia (NISER, 2002)

Examining the impact of globalization on the poverty situation in rural Africa, it is obvious that the impact has been negative, although with little benefits. The reasons why the rural African societies are affected in the process of globalization are manifold. In other words, they are not gaining from the new world economic arrangement because of some reasons among which include.

First, with the emergence of globalization and adoption of its economic policies, the African countries and societies, especially the rural populaces have lost their basic production advantage even in commodities that they consume. For instance with the elimination of boundaries and signing of WTO agreement many agricultural commodities are imported into the countries of Africa to the detriment of the local producers. In most cases, these imported commodities tend to be cheaper because of the technology employed in their production overseas. As time goes on the production level of our local agriculturists declines because of the apparent stiff competition with the imported commodities. This situation obviously leads to lower income of the agriculturists and rural dwellers, which invariably translates to increased poverty situation.

Secondly, the globalization trends induce the erosion of indigenous values, cultures, and norms, and replace them with the imported external value. Most often the newly introduced values run contrary to the realities on ground in the indigenous communities. With the notion and increase in the knowledge of what obtains in other societies (Western), our old long traditions and practices tend to be inferior to us when we compare them with the western ideas without adequate consideration. For instance, introduction of some so-called improved agricultural technologies have not performed excellently well in all agricultural sectors. Today in Nigeria, there is no technology that has been proved to be better than our native technology in production of yam tubers. By implication, when imported technologies are embraced with out adequate consideration it deepens the poverty situation of the adopters who would have lost touch with their sustainable development strategies.

Thirdly, due to high rate of illiteracy that obtains in rural African societies, their exposure to the international technology and telecommunication system worsens their situation because they are not yet ready to embrace the new technologies and ride on the high-tech telecommunication system. It creates more paradoxical situation tending towards õputting a square peg in a round holeö. It is necessary that the internal education of the illiterate population in the rural Africa be intensified before new high-techs are introduced to them. If this is not done, it will create a condition of exclusion among them, or excluding them further from world economic activities, thereby worsening their poverty level.

Measures and Options to Protect the African Poor in the Globalizing Economy

The poverty condition of rural Africa needs urgent attention in order to save the numerous populations of Africans that lives in there. This study in considering the above, based on the review of the poverty situation believes that some steps should be taken by government and people of Africa. These among others include,

- * There is need for a diagnosis of situations in the rural Africa before extending any economic reformation project to them; hence it may adversely affect them if development projects are not targeted based on the felt needs of the societies.
- * The Rural African economy, which is agricultural need to be protected against the unhealthy competition with the external forces, otherwise they would be further driven under ground by the wind of globalization.

- * Rural development projects that aim at alleviating the poor condition of the people should be designed to be mindful of the peoples long cherished, meaningful traditions and practices. Values, ethos and worldviews are important aspects that keep society self sustained and therefore should not be tampered with.
- * Taking a cue from the world conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, governments should adopt principles which conform with national progress based on growth with equity and participation which requires a redistribution of economic and political power, and fuller integration of rural economy into national development efforts, with expanded opportunities of employment and income for rural people, and development of farmers association, cooperative societies and other forms of voluntary autonomous democratic organization of primary producers and rural workers.

Conclusion

Examining poverty situation in the rural Africa is an interesting and worthwhile effort especially in the recent trend of globalization. Even though there have been poverty in rural Africa before colonialism, and subsequently globalization phenomenon, the situation tends to grow worse as years progress. There is a widespread belief that there were no 'poor' in pre-colonial rural Africa because economic differential was slight and resources were freely available and the extended family supported its less fortunate members. Only with the inception of colonial rule, market economy and urbanization, that poverty as a major problem gradually began to emerge (Sanginga, 1995). Against this background Llife, (1987) summarizes that, in rural Africa, the extended family and the clan assume the responsibility for all services for their members, whether social or economic. People live in closely organized groups and willingly accepted communal obligations for mutual support. Individuals satisfy their needs for social or economic security merely by being attached to one of these groups. The sick, the aged and children are all cared for by the extended family. In this type of community, no body can be labeled as poor because the groups usually share what they have. There is no competition; no insecurity, no big ambitions, and no unemployment and thus people are mentally healthy. There were no poor or rich, they have helped those who were in want. No man starved because he had no food, no child cried because their parents did not have cow milk, no orphan and old person starved because there was no body to look after them. There was no poverty because conditions producing them were absent. Invariably from the above anthropological insight, what created poverty in Africa was scramble for resources, unhealthy competition, new economic arrangement and status among other things. These were introduced into the society by the colonial administration, and in recent time being reinforced and sustained by the emergent globalization trend. What is happening to the rural Africans today in terms of low quality of life could be ascribed to external forces. Whereas the modernization theorists would explain the deplorable situation of Africa as a reflection of Africans internal contradictions, which is euro centric, the dependency theorists and Neo-Marxists blame the external factors in the poverty situation of Africa. In a vivid conclusion, Taylor (1992) posits that the quality of life for majority of Africa's inhabitants in the rural areas has been declining in both absolute and relative term, and there is no compelling evidence that 'development' however defined is taking place in any rural African community. Globalization trend therefore deepens rather than alleviate the poor economic condition, of rural African societies. Even though, globalization provides some selective opportunities for

developing countries, its major thrust provides challenges and threats to these countries including those in Africa.

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