

# THE TRAJECTORY OF SELECTED ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY NEXUS

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## Abstract

This paper examines the efficacy of selected federal anti-poverty programs in Nigeria (1999-2020) and their implications for national security, using the exclusion of the Almajiri population in Northern Nigeria as a critical case study. Drawing on secondary data analysis and a review of policy documents, the study finds that several anti-poverty program failures are rooted in poor leadership, flawed implementation, and the systemic exclusion of the most vulnerable groups coming from three major themes. This exclusion, it argues, fuels insecurity by creating a pool of disenfranchised youth. The paper concludes by calling for radical leadership reform and targeted, inclusive programming to mitigate this security threat.

**Key Words:** *Poverty, antipoverity programs, National Security and Almajiri*

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JEL Classification: C32, F34, P36

*“I will give you a talisman... Recall the face of the poorest and weakest man whom you man have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplated is going to be of any use to him, will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny...?” Mahatma Gandhi.*

## 1.0 Introduction

Global extreme poverty remains one of the biggest threats to humanity's advancement in the direction of sustainable development. The reality that more than three-quarters of the global extreme poor people reside in Sub-Saharan Africa or in fragile/conflict-affected countries finds contraption and contrast in the Nigerian situation. Nigeria as the largest black nation in the world with its antecedent of having a citizen in every group of ten (10) blacks and despite its vast natural and human resources has not experienced the necessary socio-economic growth, development and acceptable minimum standard of living due to persistent mass and extreme poverty triggered by different factors.

It may be argued that there exists a thin line between extreme poverty and mass poverty or one is the function of the other. Aptly, Aderounmu (2007), explains mass poverty as that poverty that affects the masses of a population who have extreme want of necessities, depicted by an almost absence of material comforts, which implies a matrix of broad implications. This resonates with the fertile conditions currently expanding in violent conflicts, organized crimes and lawlessness. seen in their protracted nature and complexity in Nigeria.

In international context, the attempt by the United Nation (UN) to mitigate and eliminate mass and extreme poverty was to set targets and programs driven through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in which the collective action sought to reduce extreme poverty by 50 percent between 1990 and 2015. While the follow-up, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target is zero extreme poverty by the year 2030 (Kenny, 2024). These goals and targets particularly against global extreme and mass poverty is barely less than four years away and the feedback is dicey.

Pointedly, Oshiomole (2000) squaring up the Nigeria situation on extreme and mass poverty stated thus; "poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere". This implies that given the nature of poverty to dehumanized and erode the dignity of man, there is a high tendency for disenchanting persons or group to transfer aggression due to living within a narrow set of options in a society with wide gaps between the 'rich' and 'poor', 'haves' and 'have-nots'. Indeed, the deluge of escalation of different ethno-religious armed conflicts along with defying insurgency, organized

crimes as kidnapping for ransom, ritual killings and banditry in Nigeria since year 2000 affirms this assertion.

Arguments abound that the myriads of these National security challenges are driven majorly by mass and extreme poverty. Thus, successive Nigerian governments over the years have initiated and implemented various public policies and programme aimed at elevating the socio-economic status of people and consequently eradicating poverty in the country. These include: the National Accelerated Food Production Programme along with the Nigerian Agricultural and Co-operative Bank in 1972, Operation Feed the Nation (1976), Green Revolution Programme (1979), the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure and Better Life for Rural Women (1986), Family Support Programme and Family Economic Advancement Programme (1993).

The National Directorate of Employment (1988), Community and Peoples Bank, Mass Transit Programme, Petroleum (Special) Trust Fund, Guinea Worm Eradication Programme. The Poverty Alleviation Programme (2001), NEEDS (2002) National Poverty Eradication Programme (2002), Youth Empowerment Scheme (2011) SURE-P (2011), YOU-WIN (2011), N-Power (2016), School feeding programme (2019), 3 million Technical Talent(3MTT) programme 2023 (<https://www.3mtt.nitda.gov.ng>), Nigerian Youth Academy (NiYA) programme 2024 (<https://www.niya.gov.ng>) amongst others. Aside this social intervention programmes, arguments persist that beside the 1960s and 1970s, Nigeria as a country has not witnessed a steady unbroken robust growth and sustainable development despite growing economic gross domestic product reports and indices.

Seeing these array of anti-poverty programmes and projects the expectations remains that the rate of poverty incidence and poverty line across regions/states in the Nigerian Federation overtime should decline. With the estimated population at 8.5 million, the Almajiri boys' group ([www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)) remain excluded despite these targeted social safety nets. Their exclusion, remains the national security concern and onerous interest of this paper.

Therefore, the focus of this paper, was to examine using secondary data and within a theoretical context, the impact of the anti-poverty programmes initiated by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The specific objectives were the following:

1. To highlight past anti-poverty programmes in Nigeria adopted to reduce mass poverty.
2. To buttress the extent exclusion of vulnerable groups, use the unit of analysis (Almajiri boys) as threats to Nigeria's National Security; and
3. Proffer pragmatic suggestions to the existing gaps in the past and current anti-poverty programmes in Nigeria.

This paper is important because at the base of violent conflicts or civil unrest within the basket of national security management is social injustice or at least a perceived notion of inequity (Zakaria, 2006). Naturally, when unemployment is high, without a corresponding option to channel human, knowledge, skills capabilities and energy positively, the negative opportunities become, attractive and viable, thus reinforcing Apor's (2002) statement: who opined that: 'a society that drives her members to a desperate situation is not a viable one'.

In the specific case of the Almajiri (young Islamic pupils) group mostly in northern Nigeria, this paper juxtaposes the attempted anti-poverty programs against their collective situation and its ramification for national security in Nigeria. This is examined in the conceptualization and theoretical framework, discussions, findings and recommendations,

## **2.0 Conceptual and Literature Review Frames**

### **2.1 Concept of Poverty**

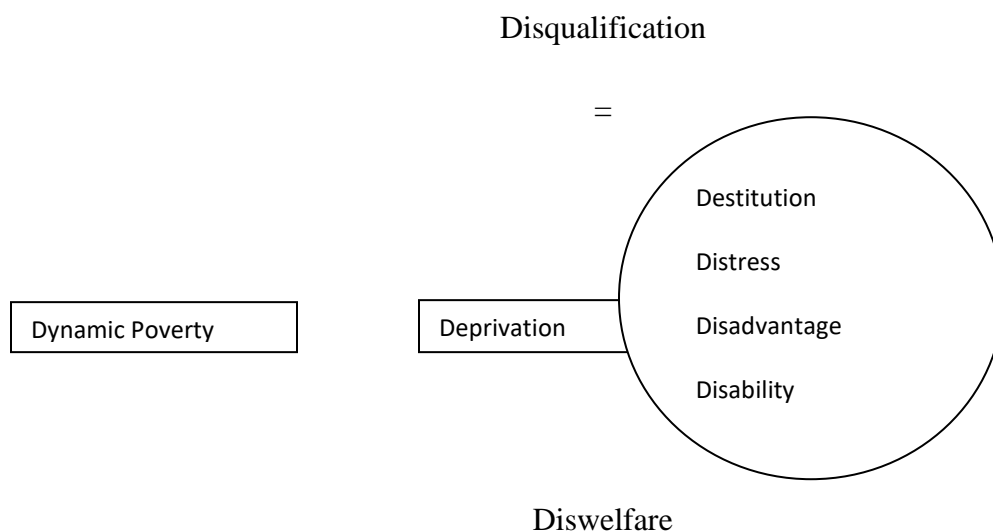
The variation of living standards around the world makes the description of poverty an uphill task to the academia, development professionals, economist, public policy makers, the poor themselves and other stakeholders within the state and non-state actors' architecture. Poverty has to be seen as a dynamic process rather than a static phenomenon, one that captures the various forms of deprivation in well-being (Zupi, 2007).

Hence, following the global World Bank (2025) index of \$3 dollars pegged per person, per day in low-income countries. However, with the Nigeria currency exchange rate to the United States dollar in 2026 averaging N1,400 this adds up to N4,200 per day and N126,000 (\$90 U.S. dollars) following the monthly wage payment system in Nigeria. This spins off with the rhetorical questions - that outside the Nigeria civil service, organized private sector and the underground (black) economy, what size of the population earn this money per day? Whose names are on the government social register addressing extreme and mass poverty in Nigeria at the three different tiers of government?

Largely related, the Nigerian poverty situation is likened to a spider's web. It spreads out in a complex subtle mix that entraps individual households and groups within a reinforced network of man-made circumstances within societies in a given country, region and locality/community. This resonates the Nigerian poverty experience as evident in 'explained' and 'unexplained' extreme poverty in mass format. The nature of deprivation in Nigeria seems to defy 'text book' and pragmatic solution attempts. One forgettable litmus test remains the covid-19 pandemic and the leadership management of it and the backlash driven by 'leadership-made' deprivation to the Nigerian masses (Biu, et.al. 2025).

Unarguably, deprivation is the second language of poverty which depicts lack of well-being, not only in terms of affordability of material goods but also the total 'man' as it bothers the mind-set and the dignity of humanity. Barabasi (2002) puts forward a clearer picture in trying to buttress understanding the concept of poverty and deprivation which political leaders in Nigeria have attempted to hoodwink its people with platitude speeches of 'sacrifice' and unbearable socio-economic policies that have 'torn' apart the social safety nets of the 'middle-class' and 'masses' continuously.

**Figure 1: The multi-D-dimension of poverty**



The idea of poverty here is connected to the concepts of common welfare and individual capabilities and qualifications; i.e. as it concerns the rural poor, urban poor, women, youths and children in Nigeria. When these groups spend a long period in poverty (almost a life span) and it spills over to their next generation (overlapping) it obviously dovetails to (un)predictable 'trickle-down' effects. Put differently, when a sub-group within the larger embraces another sets of values as attempts to counter their 'poverty', chaos and social disorder is not far away.

Indeed, whatever the typology of poverty anywhere, comes with a onerous reaction by all and sundry to it, to reduce, alleviate, eradicate and eliminate it using different policies, programmes and strategies. However, a 'quick fix' expectation to address poverty is human instinct and thus the first response in poverty alleviation measures are meant to ease emergency hardships of the poor population as in cases of structural adjustment and man-made and natural disasters (World Bank, 1999,1996,1990) while seeking longer and sustainable outcomes.

## **2.2 Anti-poverty Programmes**

Every anti-poverty programme focuses on short and long-term outcomes pursuing a three-prong agenda of poverty reduction, eradication and elimination (ie economic and social empowerment).

Poverty reduction, while involving palliative measures, are intended to raise the quality of life beyond the necessity for mere survival and livelihood of the poor in a temporary manner through the nexus of wider interventions in education, nutrition, improved health, morbidity and mortality and quantitatively, to bring about the graduation of some ultra poor to the class of not-so poor or non-poor, (World Bank, 1999,1996,1990).

Still following the World Bank (2025, 2015, 2005, 1999,1996,1990) poverty trends, poverty eradication through embracing strategies to alleviate and reduce poverty, the objective was to attack and root out the causes of extreme poverty by creating an enabling environment that engenders a sustained level of economic and social progress. Hence, the population is empowered with the requisite access to productive assets and other invest-able resources and a minimum standard of living is guaranteed for the individual by government as a larger chunk of the ‘social contract’ which should strive to eradicate poverty and inequality.

Succinctly, the elimination of poverty though similar with eradication implies completely getting rid of poverty which resonates with the sustainable development goals (SDGs) 1 & 2 - ‘no poverty’ and ‘zero hunger’ amongst the 17 SDGs. On 25 September 2015, the Member States of the United Nations agreed on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The SDGs builds on the Millennium Development Goals, the global agenda that was pursued from 2000 to 2015 and will guide global action on sustainable development until 2030. The SDGs represent an ambitious and remarkable universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people to enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030 with the overarching aim of leaving no one behind within 17 goals, 169 targets and 230 indicators (ICLEI Africa, 2019). [www.africa.iclei.org/south-africa](http://www.africa.iclei.org/south-africa)

Paradoxically argument subsist that poverty eradication (‘zero hunger’) is impracticable for humanity, as long as, by nature, there are inequalities inherent in human existence bordering physiological, motivational complexities (ie.greed) and drive, differences in resources endowment and unequal access to assets, these will always exist in any society in layers of better-of individuals,

relative to others i.e. relative poverty, (Lamin, 1996) as well as the power structure arrangements and societal value dispositions.

### **2.3 Concept of National Security**

National security is a multifaceted concept. According to Wayande (2003), security goes beyond the traditional and narrow considerations of military resources and its ability to defend national interests against both external and internal aggressors. This state-centered approach of security ignores individual and other forms of security which are vital for peace and safety of every society. It captures security issues that borders on food, environment, economic, political and the larger regional safety of human lives and property (Action Aid Report, 2003).

Security in itself depicts the condition of being protected against danger, loss and criminals according to Wehmeier (2000), which warrants more inquiry within the field of security that has other sub-concepts but which would not be elaborated. Furthermore, National security is the entire scope of measures undertaken by the governments of nation-states in providing assurance of national sovereignty to the collective population in every possible ramification (Wehmeier, 2000). Recent global and local events reveal that national security is no longer the purview of the state and state-actors. The complexities come within a network of factors ignored or downplayed overtime but now obvious threats. This can be located within vulnerable groups of different sorts as the child destitution and in the northern Nigeria context herein referred to as Almajiri.

### **2.4 Concept of Almajiri**

Today in Nigeria there are about 13 million children and teenage beggars or Almajiri, in the north of the country. Conservatively, Kano State accounts for more than half this population. The World Health Organization says over three percent of these boys suffer sexual abuse and neglect a situation that worries many northern political and social leaders (Umar and Maaji, 2025). The word “Almajiri” is derived from the Arabic word “Al-muhajirin,” meaning a seeker of Islamic knowledge. In Nigeria, Almajiri is any child or semi adult who begs for assistance in the streets or from house to house. In other words, they are children destitute, who are deprived of the basic

necessities of living and seemingly disadvantaged in all facets of socio-economic life in society. Islamic teachings strongly prohibit begging except in very special circumstances. They include a man's loss of property in a disaster, or when a man has loaned much of his money for the common good, such as bringing peace between two warring parties. The majority of Almajiri in Nigeria are children from 3 to 18 years old found mostly in northern Nigeria. Community leaders say these children are totally neglected by their parents. (Ahmed, 2007) and their population have changed over time.

Some scholars posit that "If the Almajiri system is reformed, that means the social and security threats will also be minimized" and given that they remain a ready 'army' for any use. There's also the issue of economy. When people are dependent on others due to lack of basic education and low-skills, they become unproductive and low in capacity, thus they don't contribute to the economy of northern Nigeria and the whole economy but rather they are a potential threat as manifested during civil unrest, mass protest, disorder, and currently the Islamic insurgency and terrorism threats in Nigeria.

### **3.0 Materials and Methods**

The Research Design for this paper follows a qualitative, historical policy analysis using a case study approach. The data used are primarily secondary data (e.g., government policy documents - PAP, NAPEP, NEEDS; World Bank/UNDP reports; Nigerian statistical publications; academic literature; reputable news archives). The case study is the Almajiri vulnerable group in northern Nigeria. The Almajiri remain a critical, paradigmatic case for studying exclusion and security threats, particularly in northern Nigeria and the sub-Saharan Sahel region of West Africa. The data analysis follows the analytical process that is, thematic analysis guided by the two theoretical frameworks to identify themes of exclusion, implementation failure, and security linkages.

### **4.0 Theoretical Framework.**

There are a number of competing theories of poverty that majorly shape anti-poverty strategies. These theories x-ray the causes or symptoms of poverty which is the pathway to attacking poverty,

knowing the overlapping nature of poverty. Two theories, the cultural and political-economic theories are used to explain the problem and set the parameters for discourse herein.

#### **4.1 Cultural theory of poverty:**

This theory suggests that poverty is created by the transmission over generations of a set of beliefs, values and skills that are socially generated but individually held, (Brandshaw, 2006). Further, Oscar Lewis (1966) corroborates thus: Once the culture of poverty has come into existence it tends to perpetuate itself. By the time children are six or seven they have usually absorbed the basic values of their subculture. Thereafter they are psychologically unready to take full advantage of changing conditions or improving opportunities that may develop their life time.

Given this, a point of reference for reflection is the ‘Almajiri’ system in Northern Nigeria. For decades these children have been part of a complex matrix in which they have been used to extend communal and ethno-religious ‘wars’ (conflict) of attrition at different times and in the name of ‘God’. This assertion is reinforced in this statement:

Their sponsors belong hypothetically to the same group that has for decades, denied them the right to learn how to distinguish right from wrong. If the Almajiri had well-paved streets like the ones in the G.R.A’s he would not want them littered with corpses of Christians. If he had a job, he would not expose himself to the danger that rioting comes with. If he had a home he would not be there to be incited. If he had hope, he would not find refuge in extremism (Bello-Barkindo, 2002).

The grip of culture as a ‘way of life’ keeps these vulnerable group (Almajiri) in the circle of exclusion. The extent of this deep-rooted situation puts them in the place of incapacitation that different anti-poverty programs cannot work for their empowerment due to the deficiency of their Eastern education in contrast to Western education that houses Nigeria’s anti-poverty programs. This dilemma requires reforms from state and non-state actors (ie. religious and political leaders).

#### **4.2 Political economic structure theory of poverty.**

This second theory, postulate that the configuration of the economic, political and social system causes people to have limited opportunities and resources with which to achieve income and

wellbeing. (Rank, Yoon and Harschl, 2003). Marx argues that the economic system of capitalism created the “reserve army of the unemployed” as a conscientious strategy to keep wages low. This is applicably true to Nigeria in which wages in the public sector for political office holders is skewed disproportionately to favor this group who are few to the disadvantage of the majority who are equally productive but ‘diswelfared’.

Similarly, the systematic failure of the public schools at all levels in Nigeria produces poor products (graduates) which excludes them from the limited opportunities. Much of the literature on poverty and antipoverty programmes are tailored towards breaking the cycle of poverty and towards achieving employment, wealth creation and sustainable growth within the factors that enhances development.

## **5.0 Findings**

The findings are arranged in key themes that emerged thus:

Theme 1: Implementation Failures of anti-poverty programs in Nigeria (Poor planning, political short-termism, corruption).

Theme 2: Systemic Exclusion (How program design and delivery bypassed the ultra-poor, especially the Almajiri).

Theme 3: The Security Consequence (Empirical evidence linking Almajiri marginalization to recruitment into violence).

When the civilian government in Nigeria led by president Obasanjo was inaugurated on May 29<sup>th</sup> 1999, it resolved to address the twin problems of poverty and unemployment amongst others with the initiation of the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP). In January 2000, N10billion was earmarked within the budget allocation to create jobs for 200,000 people within the framework of the programme. (Thisday, 2000).

To achieve and sustain this, the Poverty Alleviation Council (PAC) was established with the president as the chairman and the ministers of works and Housing, Agriculture, Water resources,

Industry, Education, Environment, Women Affairs and Health. In addition, was the inter-ministerial committee which identified two main strategies for the creation of jobs through short-term strategy (Public works) and sustainable jobs (Skills and Entrepreneurship Development).

As at September 2000, N5billion was spent on the purchase of equipment, logistics and beneficiaries' salaries. The programme had recruited 5,000 unemployed youths in each state of the Federation in the first phase (Aliyu, 2001).

Poor programme planning and execution of the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) necessitated a switch over of the programme to the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) on November 30, 2001. This was necessary given the deplorable and persistent high incidence of poverty in Nigeria. One of the numerous targets of NAPEP was thus:

'To restore the hope in most of the people affected by poverty and ensuring that Nigerians, particularly those in rural areas have access to the basic necessities of life (NAPEP, 2001).

The strategies for implementation of NAPEP were the following:

- ✓ Use of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) through the utilization of their capacities.
- ✓ Award of specific contracts through special intervention projects i.e. as it covers roads, dams, Universal Basic Education (UBE), Primary Health Care etc.
- ✓ Use of community facilities and capabilities by direct allocation.
- ✓ Use of states and local government facilities by direct allocation and assignment.

These strategies were carried out through the following activities classified into four schemes:

- i. Youth Employment Scheme (YES) consisting of:
  - Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP)
  - Mandatory Attachment Programme (MAP)
  - Credit Delivery Programme (CDP)
- ii. Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS) which consist of:
- iii. Social Welfare Service Schemes (SOWESS) which consist of:
- iv. Qualification Education Programme (QEP)
- v. Primary Health Care Programme (PHP)

- vi. Farmers Empowerment Programme (FEP) and
- vii. Social Service Programme (SSP)
- viii National Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDLS) which consist of:
  - Agricultural Resources Programme (ARP)
  - Water Resources Programme (WRP)
  - Solid Minerals Resources Programme (NMRP) (NAPEP, 2001).

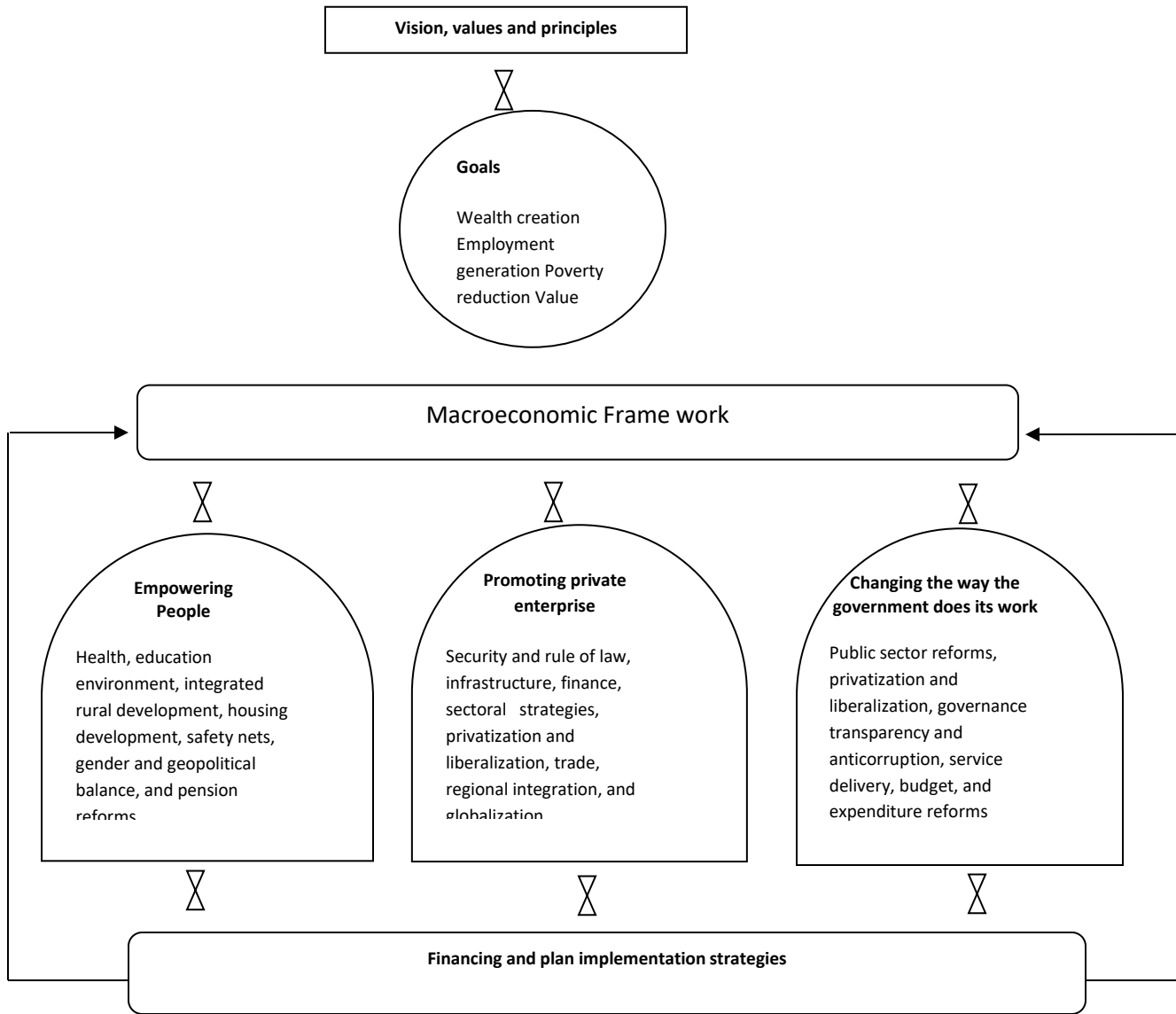
Following the re-advent of democratic civilian government in 1999, it can be argued that some of Nigeria's political leaders, policy makers and stakeholders at large underestimated the extent of social political and economic decay.

The inadequacy of one state anti-poverty program gives way for another especially when political parties lose elections as witnessed in Nigeria in 2015 elections. The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) that was introduced in 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2004 in order to respond to the persistent deep poverty and development challenges of Nigeria was abandoned like Vision 2010 and others counting.

The goal of NEEDS operation was to mobilize resources of Nigeria to make a fundamental break with the failures of the past and bequeath a united and prosperous nation to the generations to come, (NPC 2004:8). The NEEDS policy and programme has its origin in the 2001 Kuru Declaration which stated thus:

To build a truly great African democratic country, politically united, integrated and stable, economically prosperous, socially organized; with equal opportunity for all, and responsibility from all to become the catalyst of (African) Renaissance, and making adequate all-embracing contributions sub-regionally and globally. (Omari, 2004).

**Fig.2 NEEDS: Pictorial view**



*Source: NEEDS document (2000) Adapted 2025*

The NEEDS diagram above, depicts its mandate, vision and mission which is juxtaposed with the National security situation as it affects the vulnerable group of young boys in Northern Nigeria otherwise known as the Almajiri in this context. From year 2000 forward, Northern Nigeria has

witnessed violent ethno-religious crisis in Kano, Kaduna, Plateau, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Adamawa, Jigawa, Benue and Nassarawa states. (SIDA 2002).

To a large extent, the '*cultural theory*' adopted herein, explains the inter-generational trap of the Almajiri system which is detached from the Nigerian western education system. This fundamental flaw makes most of the millennium anti-poverty programs ineffective to break the cycle of poverty. This is reinforced by the absence of 'hybrid' educational system with deliberate state intervention ie. Northern Nigeria, to translate the Almajiri boys from exclusion to inclusive education. Their transition to men who are uneducated in western education makes a corollary with Marx description of the 'army' of the unemployed metamorphosed into 'human weapons of mass destruction'. This will require further interrogation within the current violent conflicts and national security realities in Nigeria.

Meanwhile, the '*political-economic theory*' explains and argues why state programs fail to break this cycle of poverty embodied in the Almajiri system due to elite capture and skewed priorities. The elites with the political leaders at the top of the food chain, have allowed the public education system decline under their watch in Nigeria. With the availability of funds for private education in Nigeria and abroad, the Almajiri system in northern Nigeria has no place in the anti-poverty program design and delivery.

Theme 2: Systemic Exclusion (How program design and delivery bypassed the ultra-poor, especially the Almajiri).

Aside pandemic political corruption, the systemic exclusion of Almajiri group as the 'poorest of the poor' in Nigeria is evident in their inability to make input into the program design and delivery. In figure 2, the pictorial overview of the NEEDS empowerment strategy is 'dead on arrival' for these excluded group. Following the analogy of forcing the 'fish' to climb the 'tree' is the dilemma of the anti-poverty programs that reinforces the song lyrics 'they don't really care about us' (Jackson, 1995). Their exclusion remains a major socio-economic and political drawback for

northern Nigeria and beyond, This ‘trickle-down’ effect dovetails into multiple fallout for Nigeria’s past and current national security challenges.

Theme 3: The Security Consequence (Empirical evidence linking Almajiri marginalization to recruitment into violence).

Umar and Maaji (2025) description of Almajiri as a Hausa translation of ‘almuhajirun’, referring to a person who travels in search for knowledge in its simplest form was further expanded to reveal the gaps in intervention by state and non-state actors. Almajiri is described as ‘a child who engages in some form of labour to earn a living’.

Put further, ‘any person irrespective of gender, who begs for assistance on the streets or from house to house as a result of deformity or disability ranging from age 7-15 years and attend informal religious school referred to as ‘makarantar alo’(wooden slate school) or ‘toka’ (Ash from use of wood fire) or ‘soro’(veranda or porch attached to a house where the students study and sleep).

This informal religious school system carries limitations that expose the children to child labour and exploitation and in the extreme radicalization. Their recruitment by violent non-state actors can connect with the trajectory of religious violence witnessed in northern Nigeria decade after decade from the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s forward in diverse forms and intensity.

The common factor in most of these crises has been an army of young destitute children usually called Almajiri. Over various different periods these young children and youths have been manipulated by some unseen forces through a mere “mess of pottage”, to inflict injury, kill, maim, rape and destroy properties belonging to supposed enemies. It would be deeply doubtful that these ‘group of boys’ are aware of the NEEDS document for their liberation.

Senator Tafida Argungu (2008) amongst a group of law makers in Nigeria sponsored a bill in the National Assembly for the establishment of a National Commission for the Eradication of Child Destitution, pointed out the negative implication of the Almajiri system thus:

Trafficking in children, exposing them to morally hostile environments, leads them into armed robberies and other vices... exposing them to a culture of violence, and the league of the unemployed (Daily Trust, 2008:56)

Hence, our national security interest here is based on the premises that the distorted Almajiri system (destitute children) which the larger Nigerian society presupposes as deviants is “man-made” or “Nigerian-made” or “Northern-made”.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

It is quite obvious that Nigeria faces a great threat of not utilizing its vast resources for its mass of citizens equitably. As Alfred Marshall observed, ‘there is no moral justification for extreme poverty side by side with great wealth’. Indeed, the happiest and secure society is that in which most citizens are independent via wealth creation and employment. No republic could remain untroubled, if a large number of citizens were economically marginalized (Schwarz, 1998).

The recommendations are conventional and unconventional thus:

1. **Policy Level:** The State house of Assembly across northern Nigeria should mandate a specific, measurable inclusion quota for vulnerable groups like the Almajiri in all social investment programs. This should be within legal and institutional frames.
2. **Programmatic Level:** The Executive arm of government that is, Governors of Nigeria’s 19 northern States, should integrate the reformed Almajiri education system with the national Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme, combining Islamic education with literacy, numeracy, and vocational skills, connected to wealth creation schemes.
3. **Governance Level:** A synergy of state actors and non-state actors should institute principles of leadership austerity and accountability, such as requiring public officials to use public services, to rebuild trust and redirect resources. Put differently and specifically;
4. **Public office** in Nigeria should be debriefed of its fanfare, opulence and waste: Thus;
  - ✓ Nigerian leaders should not use more than two cars commonly used by all.
  - ✓ They should as a norm visit public hospitals in Nigeria for medical treatment.
  - ✓ Their children should attend public or private schools in Nigeria.
  - ✓ The Federal Executive council meetings and National Council of state (Governors) meeting should be moved round to communities in Nigeria where access by road, and waterways

are difficult (that is, Hard to Reach Areas - HTRA) to experience the plight of the Nigerian masses.

- ✓ The emoluments and wages being paid to the National Assembly members should be slashed to only sitting allowances, which should be moderate.
- ✓ The leadership at the National Assembly and presidency and state levels should experience a paradigm shift through a radical constitution amendment, and leadership emergence away from the status quo (that is, leadership inclusion of vulnerable groups).

## **7.0 Conclusion**

This paper relied on secondary data and analysis of policy documents, to examine several anti-poverty programs. Their inadequacy and failures are rooted in poor leadership, flawed implementation, and the systemic exclusion of the most vulnerable groups (Almajiri) revealed in three major themes. Its core argument posits that the exclusion of Almajiri from most of the anti-poverty programs feeds insecurity by creating a pool of disenfranchised youths.

These papers argue further that Nigerians have no business with poverty. Nigeria's poverty is man-made and given this fact, the vulnerable destitute - Almajiri in northern Nigeria amongst many groups of the excluded epitomize the fundamental flaws in Nigeria government's anti-poverty policies and programs.

Nigeria's search for radical transformation leadership and reforms is still on and targeted, inclusive economic justice to mitigate National security threats is not negotiable. If the denial of distributive justice, equity and accountability by the Nigerian leadership persist especially as its concerns extreme and mass poverty, then our future is fragile. This is aptly echoed in this statement: *'A society that is not socially just and does not intend to be, Puts its own future in danger'*. (Pope II, 1980.

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