"The quest to end extreme poverty and Gap crisis in Politics of Ownership in Nigeria: Lessons for sustainable Development Goals"

Nigeria is a country where seven percent of the world’s poor live, one of the top five countries that has the largest number of poor and ranks third in the world (World Bank 2014). This situation is perplexing considering the enormous resource base at the disposal of Nigerian state, as well as efforts and resources committed in the fight against extreme poverty. For this reason, poverty continuous to have an indelible mark on Nigerian citizens beside the opportunities provided by millennium development Goals. However the rate of extreme poverty has declined due to the performance of millennium Development Goals. As MDG 2014 report on assessment on African progress notes, “the proportion of people living on less than US$1.25 a day, in Southern, East, Central and West Africa as a group decreased from 56.5 percent in 1990 to 48.5 percent in 2010. However, this figure is approximately 20.25 percentage points off the 2015 target compared to 4.1 for South Asia. On annual average, there has been an acceleration in the rate of poverty reduction; poverty declined faster over the 2005-08 period than over 1990-2005” (MDG Report on Africa 2014).

Besides, the decline in extreme poverty, vulnerable Nigerians remains high. This has taken the nation far from eradicating extreme poverty as daunting challenges of decline in labour productivity, income inequality, low job creation, drought and unfavorable climate change, and malnourishment and underweight holds sway in Nigeria. These are prevalent because the policy and programmatic interventions designed to reduce extreme poverty is constrained by ownership gap. Ownership of policies is premised on the capacity of interest groups and individuals to be more effective by forming a critical mass that aggregates and articulates public policies. Essentially ownership politics provides a synergy for attaining goals and objectives by providing enabling environment for both governments and citizens to accept or reject or modify policies and programmes in line with their desires. This paper anchors on this premise and argues that millennium Developments Goal has failed to attain the target of 21.40% poverty reduction by 2015 due to gap in politics of ownership. Therefore, the ‘Common Agency Theory” analysis the origin of vision, participating stakeholders and understanding of extreme poverty, and explains how ownership crisis is impeding on attaining MDG 1, eradication of extreme poverty. The study finds that MDG is comprehensive and driven by goal, but shortchanged in delivery by lack of adequate consultation and low level understanding and participation of the citizens. As a result the state dominates the programme to the exclusion of target beneficiaries and promotes ‘one size fits all syndrome’ which negates need diversity of stakeholders and unity of purpose in poverty reduction strategies. The study concludes that Post -2015 project must learn and adopt common agency approach that promotes the inclusion of non-state actors if the rate of population in extreme poverty in Nigeria must reduce to target.