

# **ADDRESSING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN MACRO ECONOMIC INDICATORS & PEOPLE'S QUALITY OF LIFE IN NIGERIA**

**Tope Oni**

Department of Sociology and Demography, Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Nigeria

**Akinselure Oluwafemi Philip** 

Department of Accounting, Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Nigeria

femmyakns@gmail.com

## **Abstract**

*This Paper examines issues relating to demographic and economic statistics, as they affect the people's quality of life in Nigeria. Gross National Product (GNP) statistics suggested that Nigerian economy is growing well. This disposition was further boosted by the rebasing of the Nigerian economy in 2014, ostensibly making it the largest economy in Africa. In this paper, we present demographic and economic statistics that show that since independence, our GNP and Per Capita Income have experienced remarkable growth, at a rate higher than the growth in population, until the recent sharp fall in oil price in international market. We however maintain the position that growth in GNP does not always and necessarily translate to the good and abundant life for the people, advancing plausible explanations for our position. We aver that where the economy is mono-product-based, and where the economy is grossly mismanaged, as is the case in Nigeria, the economy may appear healthy and buoyant at the macro dimension, without translating to enhanced quality of life, measured by: conditions in labour market, product market, health, education, housing, physical and social security, and life expectancy, among other measures. We adopt the content analysis methodology and aspects of Conflict theory as our theoretical framework, particularly its post-Marxian version. We propose that the academia and other groups in society must constantly redirect people's perspective (and hopefully government's emphasis) to a critical consideration of the measures of the quality of life of the population, thus going beyond the high-level national economic statistics, at time of addressing economic development issues.*

**Keywords:** *Quality of Life, Gross National Product, Development, Growth, Economy*

## INTRODUCTION

This Paper examines issues relating to demographic and economic statistics, as they affect the people's quality of life in Nigeria. Our research objective is to understand how Nigeria rates in macro-economic performance and examine the extent to which this is reflected in the people's quality of life. We obtain information from secondary data, which show that Nigeria is rated highly in overall economic performance, but also rated poorly in various indices of measuring quality of life. We advance reasons for this contradiction.

The key methodology adopted in this paper is content analysis of secondary statistical data from sources such as Nigerian Office of statistics, World Bank and United Nations Report, CIA Fact Book, and information from other secondary sources, on the Nigerian demography and economy, which are then critically analyzed and examined in the light of our theme of discussion.

Our findings indicate a contradiction between the macro-economic indices, which look positive, and the people's quality of life, which is undeniably poor and below global average. We attempt to provide plausible explanations for the apparent contradictions and proffer recommendations for achieving broad based, equitable and sustainable development in Nigeria, which will significantly and sustainably shore up the people's quality of life, both now and in the future.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We locate the contradiction between the touted economic indices of Nigeria and the people's poor quality of living within the non-Marxian conflict perspective which emphasizes that: competition over scarce resources is at the heart of most social relationships; that inequalities in power and reward are built into all social structures, and that individuals and groups that benefit from any particular structure strive to see it maintained. Non-Marxist conflict theory also avers that change occurs as a result of conflict between competing interests rather than through adaptation, as proposed in structural-functionalism. We particularly draw from the conflict theory of C. Wright Mills (1970), who submits that the ruling group often maintains its exploitative and dominant position through coercion, authority and manipulation. According to him, of these three, manipulation is the most potent tool for dominance. Manipulation is power that is wielded without the conscious knowledge of the powerless. While bureaucratic and political structures are based on authority, Mills sees such authority as often shifting toward manipulation.

Manipulation, the third type of power, is not based on terror or external force, although the police and military powers of the state still undergird its authority. Human organizations that depend on the constant use of force and intimidation to control its members are ultimately

ineffective in achieving their hegemonic intentions. A system based solely on force must expend much energy policing its members; direct coercion stifles initiative, and it provides an obvious target as rallying point for the opposition. Rather, the power of manipulation is founded upon the ever more sophisticated methods of control given us by science (including social science), media and technology. The ruling group, in a society dominated by large bureaucracies, is based on the techniques and technologies of manipulation. We consider the frequent presentation of macro-economic figures as indications that the Nigerian economy is doing well, when the abysmally poor quality of life of the people indicates otherwise, as a demonstration of the type of manipulation that C. Wright Mills alluded to.

We demur from the orthodox Marxian conflict theory because it defines class in a very narrow economic sense, as a group of people that has the same relationship to the means of production, and because it places undue confidence in the inevitability of a violent revolution, as a class in itself becomes a class for itself. Orthodox Marxism has also been proven wrong in its expectation that the socialist/communist society that would eventually emerge from the revolution - through the dialectical transformation of quantity to quality, the unity of opposites and the negation of the negation - will be classless and ensure equality among all people. The non-Marxist conflict theory recognizes the reality of inequality, competition and conflict as an on-going social reality. It admits that social class cannot be viewed simply in terms of working class and the capitalist class, as economic power can also be acquired through politics, the military, religion and education. The non-Marxist conflict theory proposes that the changes that will occur defies simplistic prediction and can go whichever way, depending on the strength and cohesion of the competing groups at any point in time. Changes will occur through intense pressure on the ruling class, coordinated and consistent advocacy, maximum use of the media and communication information technology. As Herbert Marcuse (1964) has noted, the revolution that would challenge corporate capitalism, which does not have to be bloody or violent, are concentrated at two opposite poles of society: the ghetto population, which is close to the Marxian proletariat, and the middle class intelligentsia, who will be the instrument of enlightenment and coordinated mobilization, to make the desired change happen.

## **DISCUSSION OF LITERATURE AND SECONDARY SOURCES**

In this section, we make copious reference to various works in the literature and other secondary sources that provide facts about the demographic, economic and social indicators of the Nigerian state as well as indices of the quality of life of the people, thus providing the background for our discussions, observations, conclusions and recommendations.

## Nigeria's Demographic and Economic Indicators

That the Nigerian population has consistently been on the increase from the birth of the nation till date is an inescapable fact, to which available statistics bear credence. The Population unit of the United Nations secretariat submits that Nigeria has experienced a population explosion that has been on a particularly grand scale in the last 50 years, due to very high fertility rates, and falling mortality rates, thus causing the population to quadruple during this time. It has also been observed that growth was fastest in the 1980s, after child mortality had dropped sharply, and then slowing down slightly after then, as some measure of conscious birth control has caused a fall in birth rate over time.

Table 1. Nigerian Population Statistics from 1950 - 2010

Year	Total population (x 1000)	% Increase	Population aged 0–14 (%)	Population aged 15–64 (%)	Population aged 65+ (%)
1950	37,860		41.7	55.3	3.0
1955	41,122	8.62	41.6	55.6	2.8
1960	45,212	9.95	41.6	55.6	2.8
1965	50,239	11.12	41.9	55.2	2.9
1970	56,132	11.73	42.6	54.6	2.8
1975	63,566	13.24	43.4	53.8	2.8
1980	73,698	15.94	44.0	53.2	2.8
1985	83,902	13.85	45.0	52.2	2.8
1990	95,617	13.96	44.9	52.3	2.9
1995	108,425	13.40	44.1	53.0	2.9
2000	122,877	13.33	43.5	53.7	2.8
2005	139,586	13.60	43.6	53.7	2.7
2010	159,708	14.42	44.0	53.2	2.7

Source: United Nations Population Division, 2012

(Retrieved from Wikipedia)

We are not oblivious of the likelihood that the above figures are not perfect, given the fact that population has been a sensitive and controversial issue, where some level of political manipulation cannot be ruled out, because of its implications for shaping regional, state and ethnic relations and balance of power. The figure shown in the table above however appears plausible, as it is the result of rigorous analytical efforts at both local and international level,

which seems consonant with perceived socio-historical realities. Giving credence to the logic of Nigeria's growing population after independence, Fajana(2000) makes reference to the cessation of inter-tribal wars of pre-colonial days, and increase in medical infrastructure, combined with unchanging high fertility pattern, which has consistently stimulated the high population growth rate. As Nigeria's population has been on the increase, however, so has the absolute wealth of the nation, in terms of macro-economic figures.

Concerning the nation's economic picture, the CIA World Fact Book (2015) describes Nigeria as a middle income, mixed economy and emerging market, with expanding financial, service, communications, technology and entertainment sectors. According to this source, following the April 2014 statistical rebasing exercise, Nigeria has emerged as Africa's largest economy, with 2013 GDP estimated at US\$ 502 billion. Oil has been a dominant source of government revenues since the 1970s. Regulatory constraints and security risks have limited new investment in oil and natural gas, and Nigeria's oil production contracted in 2012 and 2013, and that contraction in revenue has been more drastic in the last one year. The CIA World Fact Book further reveals that the Nigerian economy has continued to grow at a rapid 6-8% per annum (pre-rebasing), driven by growth in agriculture, telecommunications, and services, and that the medium-term outlook for Nigeria is good, assuming oil output stabilizes and oil prices remain strong. This source notes that, despite its strong fundamentals, oil-rich Nigeria has been hobbled by inadequate power supply, lack of infrastructure, delays in the passage of legislative reforms, an inefficient property registration system, restrictive trade policies, an inconsistent regulatory environment, a slow and ineffective judicial system, unreliable dispute resolution mechanisms, insecurity, and pervasive corruption. The CIA World Fact Book also maintains that economic diversification and strong growth have not translated into a significant decline in poverty levels, submitting that over 62% of Nigeria's 170 million people live in extreme poverty. A World Bank report (2014) submits that, looking across many countries and over long periods of time, the average rate of economic growth for most countries is about 2 to 3% per year, which changes from year to year as the economy goes through recessions and expansions. The report further affirms that if an economy routinely grows at about 5 percent or more per year, this is a substantial rate of economic growth, and that the growth rate category of 7 -8%, to which Nigeria belongs, is extraordinary.

The macro-economic figures, particularly in terms of the Gross Domestic Product, Gross National Product & Per Capita Income figures would give the impression that the Nigerian economy is buoyant and robust, and that it has been experiencing consistent development over the years. This, we would say, has however not translated to commensurate enhancement of the people's quality of life. This explains why Kampmark (2014) submits that economic statistics

are less reliable than weather forecasts and that Gross National Product/Gross Domestic Product say very little about the level of development or state of health of a nation, that nation-states can appear rich on macro-economic indices but still have a good portion of its citizens living on less than a dollar a day, as in the case of Nigeria. Kampmark notes that the GDP measurement had its origins in concepts of sound and sober management, based on the assumption that the detailed working of the economy would be monitored the way a doctor monitor's a patient's health, and that equitable and fair distribution of a nation's wealth would be ensured. These assumptions are hardly ever met and the concept of equity has gone really awry in developing nations like Nigeria.

Oparah (2014) alludes to how, few days after the rebasing of the Nigeria's economy in April 2014, the World Bank President stated that rebasing the Nigeria's economy would not change the actual condition of Nigeria's people, that Nigeria was the country with the third highest rate of poverty in the world, hosting 17 per cent of the total world's poor after India and China. One can understand why China and India with over one billion people each would rate high in terms of absolute figure of the poor population, but with Nigeria with just about 170 million population hosting a huge 17 per cent of the world's poor, the condition of the people is terribly dismal and appalling. Oparah therefore wonders why the largest economy in Africa cannot impact the people in a way that would halt the humiliating lives of Nigeria, which has become perhaps the world's leading supplier of economic refugees to other nations. He wonders how the miraculous stroke of economic leap occasioned by the rebasing of the economy would translate to a more secured life for poverty-wracked Nigerians, which is the real critical issue. Oparah avers that there should be no talk of a fast growing economy in the midst of astronomically high unemployment rate, grinding mass poverty, non-availability of power, dearth of infrastructure, weak industrialization and country-wide insecurity.

### **Quality of Life in Nigeria**

Numerous indices have been used to measure the quality of life of people across nations. According to Bello (2015), the most prevalent of such indices are:

- i. Purchasing Power Parity: this is the percentage of people living on less than \$1 per day. These are considered as the 'core poor', or people living below the poverty line
- ii. Life Expectancy at Birth: this is the number of years a new born child would live if prevailing pattern of mortality at the time of its birth were to remain unchanged throughout its life
- iii. Literacy Level: this refers to the entire population of all ages who can read and write in any language

- iv. Access to Health Care Services: this is measured by the percentage population for whom treatment to common diseases and injuries, including essential drugs on the national list is available, within one hour walk or travel
- v. Access to safe water: this is the percentage of the population with reasonable access to adequate amount of safe water, including treated surface water or untreated but uncontaminated water from sources such as springs, sanitary wells, protected bore holes and taps. The source must not be more than 200 meters away and members of the household do not have to spend a disproportionate part of the day fetching water
- vi. Access to Sanitation: this refers to the percentage of the population with at least adequate excreta disposal facilities that can effectively prevent human, animal and insect contact with faeces
- vii. Infant mortality rate: this is the number of deaths of infants under one year of age per 1,000 live births in a given year
- viii. Maternal mortality rate – This is the number of female deaths that occur during pregnancy or child birth per 1,000 live births.
- ix. Prevalence of Malnutrition – This is the percentage of children under age 5 whose weight for age is more than 2 standard deviation below the mean of the reference population.
- x. Unemployment rate: the percentage of the people within the labour force, who are within the working age bracket, who are currently available for work, who are not working but are looking for work.

In a 2011 UNDP Sustainability and Equity report, using Human Development Index to place countries on their education, income and life expectancy relative ratings, Nigeria was placed 156 out of 187 countries. The country was listed among “least human development” countries in terms of poverty level and low educational ranking. This is an obvious contradiction to the growth and rating of the economy in terms of macro-economic data and GDP figures. The report also put Nigeria’s life expectancy at 51.9, below that of Libya 74 (before the Libyan national crisis), Mauritius 73.4, Gabon 62.7 and South Africa, 52.8. On education, the index on Nigeria shows that the average number of years of schooling received by people’s ages 25 and older is 5.0. The report puts the highest possible years of schooling for a child in Nigeria at 8.9, if the prevailing patterns of age-specific enrolment rates persist throughout the child’s life.

According to an InterNations report (2016) captioned, “Living in Nigeria”, life in Nigeria is strongly shaped by the many infrastructural challenges of the country. Expatriates are advised that they will have to get used to frequent power outages during their time in Nigeria. Only about 40% of households have access to electricity, and even then, often only for a few hours a day.

Even in the most prestigious areas in Lagos and Abuja, diesel generators are a common sight. InterNations report aptly describes the problem of daily living in Nigeria, when it avers that there are even more pressing issues for many people living in Nigeria: the inadequate supply of safe water and the high prices of many consumer goods. For the 70% of the population living below the poverty line, the imported food Nigeria depends on is simply too expensive. Even in cities, only 60% of households have access to clean fresh water making life in Nigeria a struggle most of the time.

International report aptly captures the class contradictions in the living conditions of Nigeria. It observes that Nigeria is a country full of extremes, and, as is often the case in developing economies. The immense wealth of a minority comes at the expense of the masses, particularly in the countryside. The many infrastructural problems, including the quality of roads are a huge burden on the nation's economic potential. Ultimately, they adversely affect the quality of life in Nigeria.

Mass unemployment is both an indicator and a key causal factor in explaining the poor quality of life of the Nigerian people. Giving specific consideration to the Nigerian Labour Market, Fajana (2000) has noted that high unemployment rates in underdeveloped (or less developed countries) are unique, to the extent that the size is enormous and the speed is much faster than in the relatively advanced countries. According to him, the problem seems to defy all known remedies. Theory-inspired prescriptions seem not viable when applied in the circumstances of the Less Developed Countries. Various reports provide different figures concerning Nigeria's unemployment rate. The Trading Economics Report (2016) puts it as 10.4% and youth unemployment at 19% as at December 2015, which though high by international standard, is even considered to be understated, and does not capture the large population of the underemployed and those in disguised unemployment.

Given the dissonance and contradiction between macro-economic figures and the people's quality of life in Nigeria, the nation has remained in the league of underdeveloped countries over the years. As Orji (2008) has rightly noted, the concept of development has undergone considerable change over time. In its orthodox form, development was almost synonymous with economic growth; but over time, other considerations relating to equity and the quality of life of the people, which can be sustained over time, has become the aspects of key focus in defining development. Orji notes that this broadened development concept, which is the more relevant for sustainable development, takes a long-term view of development. It conceptualizes development as one which meets the needs of the present generation and sustains the possibility of improvement in the quality of life of the present and future generation. Development in this broad sense implies consistently improving human socio-economic welfare.

This is a holistic view of development in which micro and macro-economic, social, political, cultural and technological variable are engineered, combined and implemented as an organic and dynamic whole for the benefit of the people. It is therefore clear that the Nigerian state has been hit by the twin problems of poverty and underdevelopment, which stand in bold contradiction to the good macro-economic figures bandied around by government and international institutions.

Orji identifies the problems and consequences of poverty and underdevelopment in the Nigerian economy. According to him, poverty has become a feature of the living conditions and life situation of the vast majority of Nigerians. In all respects for which comparative data is available, the poverty situation in Nigeria is only slightly better than what obtains in sub-Sahara Africa as a whole and generally worse than what obtains in many low-income economies and in many individual African countries whose GNP and natural endowments are much lower than Nigeria's. Certain sections of the population have been worse hit and particularly vulnerable to poverty and continue to bear most of the sufferings associated with the scourge. Such severely affected groups include farmers and other rural dwellers; the teeming population of millions who operate within the informal sector of the urban economy; the elderly and the aged; women, the disabled, and of course all those trapped in the remote regions where arable land is scarce and where draught, floods, other forms of environmental degradation impede economic activity and keep both output and productivity low continuously. Poverty gives rise to many other grave social problems, some of which do not only impose enormous economic and social costs upon the non-poor and society in general, but also threaten the survival and stability of society. Hence poverty is not just a problem for the poor, but for the non-poor as well, causing the emergence and exacerbation of such social malaise as: armed robbery, militancy, prostitution, touting and thuggery, cultism, and terrorism.

### **Explaining Nigeria's Underdevelopment and Low Quality of Life**

The literature is rife with various attempts at explaining the high level of underdevelopment and poverty of African nations in general and that of Nigeria in particular, which epitomizes the strange reality of poverty in the midst of plenty. Fajana (2000) emphasizes defective manpower planning and poor industrialization strategy. Closely related to this, Orji (2008) refers to the non-empowerment of the teeming women and youth population in society. Other factors that have been adduced for Nigeria's underdevelopment include: poor budgetary planning and execution, non-diversification of the economy and failure of successive governments to focus on rural development and non-empowerment of the rural population.

However, easily the predominant and over-arching explanation for Nigeria's underdevelopment in the face of abundant resources is poor political leadership, mismanagement of the nation's human and material resources, indiscipline, lack of political will, plus monumental, institutionalized and widespread spate of corruption in public institutions and now indeed in all sectors of society. As Orji has argued, rather than tackle development and poverty alleviation in the society, our politicians and policy makers have evidently converted leadership positions and public offices into avenues for squandermania, embezzlement, corruption, money laundering abroad, to the neglect of true broad-based development, poverty alleviation and deliberate policies that should have significantly enhanced the quality of life of the people. Successive governments and political leaders in Nigeria have become embarrassed by the problem of stark and prevalent poverty of the people and have made various efforts to achieve broad-based development and poverty alleviation.

Some of these programmes aimed at poverty alleviation in the last four decades include: Operation Feed the Nation (OFN); Green Revolution; Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI); Better Life Programme; Family Support Programme; National Directorate of Employment; National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS); People's Bank & Community Bank; Poverty Alleviation Programme; National Poverty Eradication Programme, and the Vision 2020 initiative. While it is undeniable that some individuals and sections of the population have at different times benefitted from each of these programmes, they have on the whole amounted to fragmented, piece-meal, short-term solutions to the grave problem of endemic poverty. Indeed, as Orji has rightly noted, they are sometimes nothing more than self-centred attempts at regime sustenance, power justification and consolidation, and also as avenues for their cronies to make quick monies.

Iroanusi (2006), representing the popular view, submits that widespread corruption in all political, economic and social institutions has caused the debasement of public life, public value and public morality, and that this trend has become entrenched and sustained. Corruption in public life has its root and foundation in the huge income that government gets from petroleum and energy resources, although it eventually spread to all aspects of the business, political and social life of the people. The oil resources, for this reason, have been described as a curse rather than a blessing in the Nigerian society. In this vein, Abutudu and Garuba submit that even though the vice of corruption is not necessarily new in the country, like elsewhere around the world, the fact remains that it is today largely facilitated by the rentier character of the country's abundant oil wealth which has fetched Nigeria over \$600 billion in the past 52 years.

It is noteworthy that various anti-corruption laws, legal frameworks and institutions have been put in place by various regimes over the years. These include: The Corrupt Practices

Investigation Bureau, Public Complaint Commission, Economic & Financial Crimes Commission, Independent Corrupt Practices Commission and so on. These bodies, on the whole, have only achieved minimal success in stemming the tide of corruption in Nigeria, as many of their officials are found to be corrupt, while prevailing government and political leadership sometimes manipulate them in their favour, or the intricate judicial process scuttle their efficacy.

The overall effect of massive, sustained, widespread corruption in Nigeria's public institutions, coupled with poor political leadership skills, have made our fairly impressive macro-economic indices virtually meaningless, leaving the mass majority of Nigerians uncared for, wallowing in abject poverty and generally low quality of life.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RAISING THE PEOPLE'S QUALITY OF LIFE THROUGH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

The thrust for achieving a broad based, sustainable development which will be effective in raising the quality of life of Nigeria will consist of three broad dimensions – visionary and just leadership, employment creation and a victorious war against corruption. Each of these three dimensions are examined in turn.

### **Effective Political Leadership**

Visionary, responsible and honest political leadership holds the key to Nigeria's broad-based and sustainable development, which will shore up people's general quality of life and make the nation a generally comfortable place for people to live in, since we are naturally blessed with abundant natural resources that could be tapped and deployed to meet the people's existential needs. Greater competence and professionalism should be injected into our budget planning, at all levels. Such budgets must effectively address all key areas that affect people's quality of life, including education, health, housing, security, and a clement and sane environment, among other aspects. Once necessary policies, plans and programmes are put in place in our budgets that address these critical areas that affect people's quality of life, great control and discipline must be enforced to ensure that the approved budget is faithfully and responsibly implemented. If each annual budget addresses these key determinants of people's quality of life, and they are carefully implemented, Nigeria will experience authentic, people-oriented, broad-based and sustainable development that will progressively and positively transform the quality of life of the people.

Sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable

development is an approach to development that seeks to balance different, and often competing needs, while taking into cognizance the environmental, social and economic limitations we face as a society. The task of ensuring sustained economic development in Nigeria is the responsibility of all stakeholders, although government must take the lead. Following the visionary and clear developmental focus and disciplined budgeting practice we have emphasized, the issue of generating employment for Nigerians, using a multi-dimensional approach, must take a central place in the developmental activities of all stakeholders in society.

### **Employment Generation**

Although it has been noted that unemployment in developing countries in general, but in Nigeria in particular, appears to be an intractable challenge, we cannot give up on seeking and striving for effective solution, given the diversely destructive repercussions of mass and prolonged unemployment for the individual, the polity and the society, particularly among the youths. Practical solution to the unemployment problem should be focused on three strategic loci – the systemic/political, the corporate/organizational, and the individual.

Government institutions at all levels should focus on deliberate and strategic manpower planning, to cover short-term, medium term and long term ranges, with intense commitment and clear focus on positive result. Such planning will take into consideration such factors as the current and expected supply of labour, current and expected demand for labour, how the supply side can be appropriately managed in terms of right education and skills acquisition programmes and long term control of the population, and how the demand side can be deliberately expanded through diversification, industrialization, reviving the various productive activities that have been underdeveloped such as agriculture, mining industry, among others. The commitment of the present government to buoy local production and reduce mass importation must be backed up with appropriate action. Indeed, there must be a deliberate and sustained government attention to transforming Nigeria from being a mono-product economy that depends only on oil, to a diversified, multisectoral economy.

The IT industry in Nigeria, for instance, has so much been neglected and overlooked with little support from the government needed for its rapid development. Much revenue is lost annually to the tune of billions to outsourced IT abroad by our companies while we have a lot of IT professionals and potentials in the country. This is due to absence of public awareness campaigns like talent exhibitions, state organized or sponsored competitions among IT professionals aimed at showcasing Nigerian talents and encouraging partnerships and investments from our corporate organizations. The interests and talents of Nigerians in the fast developing Information technology industry should be encouraged and supported through

government/private partnership sponsored programs. It can be recalled that much of the big companies in the world today like Google, MySpace, and Facebook were startup businesses which received sponsorships from their countries to make them successful.

Government should engage in active promotion of individual entrepreneurship among Nigerian youths, through an aggressive process of enlightenment and mobilization, training, financial support in raising initial capital, and few years' tax holiday until consolidation is achieved, as a form of encouragement and motivation. All the above will be realizable when all required infrastructures are made widely available and functional, and when the malaise of corruption is excised from our political, economic and social systems.

The corporate/organisational dimension in addressing the big unemployment challenge in Nigeria is key. Even though there is a general mass unemployment that is plaguing the Nigerian economy, which is the big, intimidating concern of the economy, the fact that organisations have skill shortages for some jobs, at some levels, is undeniable. The fundamental problem is systemic, due to the rapidly evolving skills demands of the global economy and demographic trends in an aging global workforce. Businesses can no longer simply rely on the labour market, or a bidding competition, to ensure access to required talent. Employers must come to understand that proactive talent development tailored to their own requirements is in their own interest, and is indispensable to sustaining their long-term growth. The bottom line for youth employment is that businesses' proactive talent management strategies must include recruitment of potentially trainable workers, including young people, coupled with an employer investment in preparing these individuals in the specific skills that will support emerging business requirements. Employers must transform their mindsets to consider candidates who may not meet all of the job specifications, but whose capability gaps can be filled in a timely and cost-effective way. Training is vital. A commitment to reskilling and upskilling current and potential employees will enable organizations to expand the available pools of talent, ensure that their workforces continue to be appropriately skilled, and keep employees engaged in their work.

Corporate organisations should work hand in hand with academic institutions and professional organisations in this respect. Employers can partner with schools to improve the quality and delivery of career services for young people at a time when they are making important decisions about their future. One of the simplest and most direct things that employers can do is to partner with schools and vocational institutions to increase young people's exposure to the world of work. Corporate executives can provide speakers and participants for related activities such as career days. For many youth, business leaders can serve as role models and as an inspiration to set more ambitious goals for themselves.

Vocational education should be promoted by government, corporate bodies and academic institutions.

The Education for Employment Foundation (EFEF) is a highly respected NGO that develops tailored training programs for unemployed youth in the Middle East and North Africa, directly linked to local job opportunities. It operates in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, West Bank/Gaza, Jordan, and Yemen and is exploring expansion into other countries in the region. EFE works with its employer-partners to secure job commitments ahead of training. They focus on sectors of the economy that offer solid growth potential but lack appropriately qualified personnel. EFE works alongside employer partners to recruit unemployed youth and train them in the specific skills they need to succeed in that job. EFE recruits students through local NGOs, professional and community organizations, advertisements and postings at university campuses. EFE starts with state-of-the-art curricula and then tailors their programs to local needs. Courses are highly interactive to encourage learning by doing, and most run for one to three months. Program graduates are placed directly into jobs for which they were trained. EFE's training programs include: Accounting, Banking, Construction Project Management, Land Surveying, Sales, Textile Merchandising, Teaching, Professional Skills, and Entrepreneurship training. Programmes that are similar to EFE has emerged in Nigeria but they are still at a very rudimentary level, and the coverage has been extremely limited. Government agencies, corporate organisations and NGOs are required to give greater attention to training job seekers in skills areas that are in dire need in the corporate organisations, in the context of a working relationship with the corporate bodies, who are committed to absorbing them for jobs after the training.

The individual dimension is important in finding solution to the unemployment challenge in Nigeria and other developing economies. The individual dimension will involve the orientation of Nigerian youths, including graduates of universities and polytechnics to change their perceptions about menial jobs, as being inferior and disdainful. A change of mindset is required in Nigerian youths, such that they are willing to take on any job that can fetch them the means of survival and add value to society, without thinking that their self-esteem is diminished in any way. Youths should focus on skills and competence development, rather than the hitherto overblown focus on theoretical academic qualifications and abstract knowledge. Undergraduates should learn to take more active interest in the nature and activities of the corporate world and the work place in general, in order to deliberately prepare themselves through acquisition of knowledge as well as purposive skills and competence development.

Oyewole (2010) lists the employability skills that students in tertiary institutions must develop while in school, which include: willingness to learn, networking, organizational skills, team spirit, oral and written communication, leadership, interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, analytical skills, business acumen, IT/computer literacy and specific occupational skills. Nigerians youths should develop and challenge themselves in business start-up, self-employment and entrepreneurship. Unlimited business ideas exist, in seeking to meet the diverse needs of the over 170 million people in Nigeria. It is generally believed that the generation of ideas come first, and that the capital and needed resources will come later. It is also hoped that government and private agencies will come in to active support and encourage entrepreneurship among Nigerian youths.

While at work, Nigerian youths should display the right attitude to work, which include: commitment, team spirit, good communication, initiatives, hard work, continuous improvement mindset and respect for individuals. We know that organisations that pursue peak performance have their core values and various formal and informal training programmes to ensure that workers imbibe these values. The general impression, however, is that these highly prized workplace competencies and values are rapidly suffering atrophy among new generation youths. Individuals should continue to concentrate on pursuing growth, skills development, constant training and continuous improvement drive. Through this, they will be adding great value to their organisations, who will not want to lose them, and they more easily achieve career advancement and self-actualisation, which will make them great assets in wealth creation and in developing and mentoring other people.

To complement the possible solutions suggested above, we posit that the efforts to solve Nigeria's unemployment problem will achieve greater success if it takes into consideration and deliberately integrate the cultural dimension. In addition to all the suggestions advanced above, the government is encouraged to address the cultural diversity dimension in solving the unemployment problem in the country, after a more thorough empirical research on the potency of the cultural factor in understanding the structure of the labour market and the nature of the unemployment problem across Nigeria's diverse culture. We provide some suggestions here, to demonstrate how this can be done.

While vocational education is required in all parts of Nigeria, it can be given much greater emphasis in the North, given the people's general preference for manual and vocational jobs such as shoe making, preparation of local fast food etc. Particular attention should be given to developing agriculture, with mechanized and irrigation support, and provision of ranches for cattle rearing. In the South West, where there seems to be a strong preference for education and formal employment, conscious efforts should be made to influence the

educational system, to ensure that it promotes skills and competency development that reflect the common demands in the private and public sector. Entrepreneurship should be emphasized, while there should be more deliberate efforts in encouraging the young generation to embrace agriculture, with the government providing all needed support. All types and levels of vocational education should also be encouraged. The Igbo's flair for local manufacturing and trading should be recognized and capitalized upon, with the government encouraging the emergence of local industries, while providing all needed financial, infrastructural and policy supports for the growth of local industries. The regulatory framework for all local productions must be put in place, to ensure that required standards are met in the products that are turned out. All the supports needed in the sales and distribution of Nigerian-made products across the country and internationally should be provided, to encourage those that have flair for trading to establish thriving business, within the ambience of the law. Formal education should be further encouraged in the South-South, while industrialization and agriculture should be actively supported and facilitated, to complement available jobs in the oil sector. Environmental protection and stemming the tide of environmental destruction in the Niger Delta will be key to addressing the problem of unemployment in this region.

Salami (2013) appears to be arguing in this direction when he avers that, although many law makers and top government officials realise the potential of new enterprises in promoting employment growth, a centralized administration of entrepreneurial activities have tended to impede their effectiveness. According to Salami, governments should discontinue entrepreneurial policies that seem to suggest a one-size-fits-all approach. For example, school curricula are the same across the country even though there is a marked difference in academic achievement and orientation between the North and South and West of Nigeria. Due to this socio-cultural diversity inherent in developing countries like Nigeria, entrepreneurial policies that are unique and indigenous to the respective states should be vigorously pursued. Increased integration of the poor into global value chains is essential for poverty reduction. Agriculture, which is largely informal, employs about 70% of the labour force, a large portion of which is poor. Adding value to agriculture tradables will create more jobs through its upstream and downstream integration with other sectors of the economy, increase export revenues, boost income of the poor and reduce poverty incidence.

In summary, for broad-based, authentic development to be realized in Nigeria, which would consistently and effectively raise the quality of life of the people, beyond the economic indices being used as instrument of hegemonic manipulation, principal infrastructures have to be developed and maintained, government has to be actively involved in enhancing job creation by promoting agriculture, industrialization, support for the services sector and information

technology system, encouragement and support for entrepreneurship, particularly young entrepreneurs, and the provision of social security for such needy groups in society such as the physically challenged, old people/retirees and the unemployed.

### **Victorious War Against Corruption**

All of these initiatives would be impossible unless the corruption monster is destroyed or greatly weakened. In this vein, Alo (2015) admits that the menace of corruption, which has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian society, would require all the necessary control mechanisms that could be put in place. Some of the anti-corruption antidotes that Alo suggests include: participatory democracy that will create effective channels for monitoring and holding those in charge of the state and its treasury accountable; effective taxation system where everyone is made to explain his or her source of income through end-of-year income tax filing; legal and institutional framework for prosecuting corrupt public officers, with the required political capacity, will and commitment for leaders to enforce existing laws against corruption. Other suggestions advanced by Alo for combating corruption in Nigeria include: effective legal system free from the encumbrances of technical clumsiness and delays, the removal of the immunity clause; the effective and faithful functioning of the legislative bodies; the establishment of necessary civil service reforms; the effective use of various electronic and computer technologies to track down corrupt and criminal practices; a corruption-free, analytical, vociferous and critical mass media; constant publication of the names of corrupt officers; and a deliberate, radical transformation of the present socio-cultural values that promote: greed, avarice, selfishness, vanity, impunity and hero-worship.

Finally, in addressing the bane of corruption in our society, the academia, working with the media as the conscience of the nation, should continually generate conceptual and empirical works that will awaken the nation to destructive repercussions of poor and irresponsible leadership, the existential conditions of the people in society, and how the developmental and inequality challenges of the nation can be successfully confronted and overcome with a sustained force, drawing from applicable experiences in other nations and societies around the world.

The key emphasis of this paper, which is what we consider as its contribution to knowledge, is the application of the Neo-Marxist conflict theory to the economic, political and developmental challenges of Nigeria. We submit that the radical transformation to the various challenges outlined above will not come easy, will not occur naturally without some push, and will involve some social pressure, in which the middle class and intelligentsia on one hand and the lower class, working class and the ghetto population will engage in a coordinated, sustained

thrust to press for change in the economic and political management of the nation and its resources. It is clear that underdevelopment and widespread poverty of Nigeria is man-made, a product of human corruption, mismanagement, misinformation, manipulation, and persistent conspiracy among the succession of leadership we have had in Nigeria. Change can only come through a strong, coordinated and sustained pressure by the middle class and intelligentsia, who will provide the needed mobilization for the masses, forcing our political leaders to be more sensitive to people's plight and to manage the nation and its resources in the interest of the masses.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Our discussions in this paper address the challenge of the disparity between the macro-economic indicators of Nigerian economy, which seem to suggest that the economy is doing well on the one hand, and the stark poverty and poor quality of life of the predominant majority of the Nigerian people. Secondary data are used to demonstrate that the Nigerian economy is considered to be reasonably buoyant using the macro-economic indices, while equally valid secondary data and views are used to establish the poor quality of life of most Nigerians. A clear contradiction is therefore apparent in this respect. We consider the deliberate emphasis of our leaders on the economic indices, while they do little to admit the dismal state of people's quality of life, a take a decisive and sustained steps to address it, as deliberate manipulation, which falls within the theoretical explanation of the Non-Marxist conflict theoretical model, on how the ruling and hegemonic class and group in modern society, delude the generality of the people, to sustain the current, established system, which runs in their favour.

The contradictions between economic indicators and the people's quality of life in Nigeria are explained in terms of: poor and insensitive political leadership; inconsistent economic and social development policies and programmes, and failure to pursue the implementation of such policies and programmes with focus and commitment, after ensuring that all stakeholders make input into development policies; weak focus on manpower planning and broad-based employment schemes, and of course the bane of corruption in the Nigerian society, particularly among public officers.

We advance various suggestions on how authentic development can be made a reality in Nigeria, through employment generation that will involve government, corporate bodies, academia, and the individuals in society, and that will take account of the ethnoregional and cultural diversity of Nigerians. Other recommendations include: good budget practice and faithful implementation of the budget, focus on infrastructural development, deliberate policies and programmes to buoy industrialization, agricultural growth and the enhancement of the

service sector. We submit that none of these will be possible until the destructive bane of corruption is effectively addressed in our society. We thus advance

various recommendations on how the problem of corruption can be checked and overcome in the Nigerian society over time, thus creating a conducive environment for broad-based, sustainable development that will ensure equity and a high quality of life for the Nigerian people, comparable with what obtains in developed countries that adopt global best practices in their development drive.

## WAY FORWARD

This paper has focused on recognizing and addressing the disparity between macro-economic indicators, quality of life and sustainable development in developing economies, using the Nigerian case as illustration. It is a largely qualitative work, though we have used some secondary data as supportive material for our positions, at appropriate points. In pursuing the ample field for further studies on this subject, we recognize the need for more directly quantitative studies where the relationships among the variables involved will be measurably analyzed and presented, with clear conclusions. We will for example be interested in the actual figures of annual changes in Gross National Product, Gross Domestic Product and Per Capita Income on the one hand, and the changes in the various indices of quality of life among different groups and segments in society. Such quantitative empirical studies can also show how the various groups and classes of people perceive their current quality of life and their subjective requirements and needs for a happy life. The advantage of this approach is that the emerging conclusions stand on valid and reliable grounds, and the recommendations and action steps that will follow will more effectively address the challenges that confront developing economies in respect of the required conditions for sustainable development in Third World Nations.

## REFERENCES

Abutudu, M. &Garuba, D. (2011). *Confronting the Resource Curse: The Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative in Perspective*. Abuja: CISL AC Publishing.

Alo, A.O. (2015). *Corruption Monster – The Social Ebola that Transforms Physicians to Patients in Nigeria*. Being 3rd Inaugural Lecture in Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji, Osun State, Nigeria.

Bello, R.A. (2000). *Socio-Economic Indicators and the Quality of Life in Nigeria*. In: *Leading Issues in General Studies: Humanities and Social Sciences*,. Ilorin: University of Ilorin Press.181-185

CIA World Fact Book (2015). *Nigeria Economy 2015*. Retrieved from: [http://www.photius.com/worldfact\\_book\\_2015/nigeria/nigeriaeconomy.html](http://www.photius.com/worldfact_book_2015/nigeria/nigeriaeconomy.html); Retrieved, June 15th, 2016

Fajana, S (2000). *Functioning of the Nigerian Labour Market*. Lagos: Labonfin and Company.

Iroanusi, S.O. (2006). *Corruption: The Nigerian Example*. Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publications.

Kampmark, B. (2014). Deceptive Gyration: Rebasing Nigeria's economy. Retrieved from: <http://intpolicydigest.org/2014/04/18/deceptive-gyrations-rebasing-growth-nigerian-economy>; Retrieved, June 15th, 2016.

Marcuse, H. (1964). One dimensional man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society. Boston: Beacon Press.

Mills, C. Wright. ([1970). The Power Elite. New York: Oxford University Press.

Oparah, P.C. (2014). Nigerian Rebasing and the Making of a Phantom Economy. Retrieved from: <http://saharareporters.com/2014/04/15/nigerian-rebasing-and-making-phantom-economy>; Retrieved, July 18th, 2016

Orji, J.I. (2008). New Approaches to Effective Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria. Kaduna: Joyce Publishers.

Oyewole, I. (2010). Becoming Employable. Lagos: Quill & Parchment Limited.

Salami, C.G.E. (2013). Youth Unemployment in Nigeria: A Time for Creative Intervention. International Journal of Business & Marketing Management, 1 (2), 18-26.

Trading Economics (2016). Nigeria – Economic Indicators. Retrieved from: [www.tradingeconomics.com/nigeria/indicators](http://www.tradingeconomics.com/nigeria/indicators); Retrieved: July 18th, 2016

United Nations Development Programme (2011). Quality of Life Index. Retrieved from: <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/hdr/humandevlopmentreport2011.html>.; Retrieved: June 15th, 2016

Wikipedia Free Encyclopaedia (2016). Demographics of Nigeria. Retrieved from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/demographics\\_of\\_nigeria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/demographics_of_nigeria); Retrieved, June 20th, 2016

World Bank Report (2014). Nigeria Economic growth. Retrieved from: [www.worldbank.org/en/country/nigeria/publication/nigeria-economic-report-improved-economic-outlook-in-2014-and-prospect-for-continued-growth-look-good](http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nigeria/publication/nigeria-economic-report-improved-economic-outlook-in-2014-and-prospect-for-continued-growth-look-good); Retrieved, June 20th, 2016