



Exploring Alternative Approaches to Addressing Multidimensional Poverty in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract: Economists have increasingly recognized poverty as a complex phenomenon, particularly since the 1970s, viewing it as a multifaceted issue characterized by interrelated and interdependent dimensions. Understanding this complexity and the interconnectedness of various forms of deprivation is crucial for developing effective poverty eradication policies. This understanding was reflected in the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals and later the Sustainable Development Goals between 2000 and 2015. Against this backdrop, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the political and economic factors contributing to the high rates of multidimensional poverty in Nigeria's northern region. It will examine long-term poverty trends, assess the effectiveness of poverty alleviation interventions by successive administrations, and explore alternative strategies for poverty mitigation, considering the multifaceted nature of poverty and the need for holistic approaches to address this complex issue.

Keywords: Cross-Border Trade, ECOWAS, Border Closure, Food Security, Import and Export, Regional Economy, Food Crisis, Poverty, Inflation.

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Review Paper

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1. INTRODUCTION

Economists have increasingly recognized poverty as a complex phenomenon, particularly since the 1970s, understanding it as a multifaceted issue characterized by interrelated and interdependent dimensions. This enhanced understanding has led to the development of more sophisticated measures that capture the intricate relationships between monetary and non-monetary aspects of poverty. By the turn of the millennium, it became widely acknowledged that poverty is a networked phenomenon, with financial deprivation often intertwined with various non-financial forms of need. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of poverty and the interconnectedness of different dimensions of deprivation is crucial for devising holistic poverty eradication policies. This realization was exemplified by the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals and later the Sustainable Development Goals between 2000 and 2015.

Despite Nigeria's abundant natural and human resources, poverty remains one of its most pressing challenges. Current data reveals that Nigeria continues to have one of the largest populations of impoverished individuals globally, with the majority residing in the northern region. According to the Nigeria Bureau of

Statistics, the rate of multidimensional poverty is rising, with significant disparities between states. For instance, while multidimensional poverty in Ondo State stands at 27%, it soars to 91% in Sokoto State, highlighting stark regional disparities.

The prevalence of poverty in Nigeria, particularly in rural areas, has been steadily increasing since the 1980s, accompanied by challenges such as food insecurity and a widening gap between production and consumption. Liberalization reforms, which led to currency devaluation and soaring consumer prices, have further exacerbated the poverty situation. The northwest zone, in particular, has consistently recorded high poverty rates, aligning with the United Nations' definition of a Least Developed Country.

The economic downturn, particularly following the decline in global oil prices, has further compounded the poverty crisis. The depreciation of the Naira has resulted in increased inflation and reduced purchasing power, exacerbating the challenges faced by impoverished communities.

Against this backdrop, this paper seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the political and

economic factors contributing to the high rates of multidimensional poverty in Nigeria's northern region. It aims to examine long-term poverty trends and assess the effectiveness of poverty alleviation interventions implemented by successive administrations. Additionally, the paper will explore alternative strategies for poverty mitigation, considering the multifaceted nature of poverty and the need for holistic approaches to address this complex issue.

2. Multidimensional Poverty: Concepts and Measures

The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is a tool used to quantify acute poverty, defined as the incapacity of an individual to achieve the minimal requirements set out by international agreement. By reflecting the acute deprivations in health, education, and living standards that a person suffers concurrently, it enhances traditional monetary metrics of poverty. Therefore, one measure of poverty that takes into account the various deprivations that impoverished people experience in terms of living standards, health, and education, is the worldwide Multidimensional Poverty Index, or global MPI2. According to the World Bank;

Poverty as a state where an individual is not able to cater adequately for his/her basic needs of food, clothing and shelter; he or she is unable to meet social and economic obligations; lacks gainful employment, skills, assets and self-esteem; has limited access to social and economic infrastructure such as education, health, portable water and sanitation; and consequently has limited chance of advancing his/her welfare to the limit of his/her capacities (World Bank, 1999).

In its most basic form, poverty is the state in which those who suffer from it are deprived of the necessities of existence. Not having enough food, clean water to drink, a suitable place to live, and access to healthcare are some of these necessities. The vast majority of Nigerians reside in such circumstances. Over the years, laws and programs aimed at ending poverty have been implemented, but it is apparent that not much has changed since the threat of poverty has been growing. Nonetheless, Nigeria has committed to achieving the eight (8) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the year 2015 in accordance with the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which was issued at the Millennium Summit held in New York in September, 2000. Among these is the eradication of severe hunger and poverty. Reducing multidimensional poverty is closely related to other MDG targets including gender equality, access to clean water and basic education, and a decrease in the death rate.

One of the advantages of multidimensional poverty studies over unidimensional poverty studies is that the former's definition of poverty is broader, allowing a higher number of destitute people to be

included. When we consider that, while the link between monetary poverty and other deprivations such as access to education and infrastructure is significant, it is not perfect this attribute becomes even more important.

Moreover, the Poverty and Shared Prosperity Report, states that almost one-third of those who experience multidimensional poverty are not included in the monetary headcount ratio. A nation's multidimensional poverty index (MPM) is at least as high as or greater than its monetary poverty rate, suggesting that nonmonetary factors are more significant for overall well-being and contribute more to multidimensional poverty. According to World Bank Report, March 2022, as many as 4 in 10 Nigerians live below the national poverty line. The report further states that:

Over half of the population of Nigeria are multidimensionally poor and cook with dung, wood or charcoal, rather than cleaner energy. High deprivations are also apparent nationally in sanitation, time to healthcare, food insecurity, and housing. In general, the incidence of monetary poverty is lower than the incidence of multidimensional poverty across most states. In Nigeria, 40.1% of people are poor...and 63% are multidimensionally poor... Multidimensional poverty is higher in rural areas, where 72% of people are poor, compared to 42% of people in urban areas (World Bank, 2022).

The prevalence of poverty in the northern area of Nigeria is extremely alarming, with over 76% of the population categorized as poor, even with the region's wealth of resources. The region offers fertile soil in addition to a wide range of agricultural products and other resources including tin, barite, zinc, limestone, columbite, lead, and gypsum. Despite having a plethora of resources, the region has the highest rates of severe poverty, violence, and high crime. There appears to be a paradox in the region's progress, which necessitates analyzing its extreme poverty. The next section looks at the factors that exacerbate prevalence of poverty in recent years.

3. Past and Current Approaches to Poverty Mitigation

The Nigerian Agricultural Co-operative Bank (NACB), established to support agricultural financing, and the National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP), founded in 1972 under Gen. Yakubu Gowon's leadership, were among the earliest initiatives aimed at reducing poverty in Nigeria. Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), launched by General Olusegun Obasanjo in 1976, sought to bolster food production and security in an economy increasingly reliant on crude oil. Notably, OFN involved sending undergraduates to rural areas to instruct farmers in modern agricultural techniques.

In 1979, Alhaji Shehu Shagari introduced the Green Revolution Programme, aiming to boost food supply and reduce food imports. However, the policy primarily benefited the wealthy, exacerbating poverty among the poor. Gen. Ibrahim Babangida's administration in 1985 introduced the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), which, despite its poverty reduction goals, failed due to its impersonal execution.

In 1986, the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) was established to enhance rural infrastructure and reduce food production costs. Despite its objectives, the program was criticized for corruption and inefficiency. The same year, General Babangida created the Nigerian Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) to promote large-scale commercial farming, but it also faced similar issues of elite exploitation.

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE), established in 1986, remains the enduring legacy of Babangida's administration, focusing on job creation through various training programs. However, its lack of follow-up plans limited its impact.

General Sani Abacha's Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) and subsequent initiatives such as the Better Life for Rural Women and Family Support Programme, launched in the late 1980s and early 1990s, aimed to alleviate poverty but were largely ineffective.

In 1999, the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) was introduced with the goal of providing direct employment to 200,000 individuals. Although it later evolved into the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in 2001, it struggled to achieve significant results, leading to calls for investigations into its effectiveness.

The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), implemented with a focus on government reform, private sector growth, and social improvements, was seen as Nigeria's domestic response to the Millennium Development Goals. Its state and local counterparts, SEEDS and LEEDS, aimed to align with federal strategies and promote collaboration among stakeholders.

Under President Umar Musa Yar'Adua, the Seven-Point Agenda (2007) addressed various development issues but faced criticism for its broad scope and inadequate oversight. Similarly, President Goodluck Jonathan's Transformation Agenda (2011–2015) aimed to drive economic growth and reduce poverty but encountered challenges including insecurity, lack of citizen engagement, and corruption.

The administration of Muhammadu Buhari created the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, a full-

fledged ministry, to address the fundamental requirements of those who can be considered the weak and impoverished in society. Additionally, Buhari oversaw the establishment of the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), a ministry-based organization. NSIP has four clusters it is implementing to achieve its mandate which are N-Power, the National Home Grown School Feeding Programme, Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP) and the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT), where a comprehensive data base of poor and vulnerable Nigerians is captured with a view to receiving monthly stipends to cushion the effects of poverty on poor households across the country.

Nevertheless, similar to earlier programs, the proponents of these projects face different charges of corruption and misuse of public monies, severely impairing efforts to alleviate the nation's increasing poverty rate. The present administration's initiative to reduce poverty has also been marred by accusations of corruption, poorly thought-out policies, and, most importantly, a disorganized implementation phase.

4. Factors that Exacerbate Poverty in the North

Over the years, many issues have made it more difficult for the North to realize its potential and create a successful and virtuous community. A few of these issues are covered in the sections below;

i. The Challenges of Agricultural Mechanization

Northern Nigerians depend mostly on agriculture for their livelihood. Farmers make up more than 75% of the population in the area. More than 75% of the country's landmass is in this region, and more than 92% of it is arable. However, since Nigeria's oil boom began, the country's agricultural sector has suffered, and poverty and hunger continue to be major obstacles to progress. Agriculture's forward and backward links with other economic sectors, including industry, make it essential to eliminate multifaceted poverty in Northern Nigeria.

Apparently, a significant reliance on the oil industry, institutional weakness, and inadequate policy are the main causes of the agriculture sector's poor performance in the North. It is imperative that the North declare an emergency in the agriculture sector in order to establish alternative growth models and set a new direction for its people.

Value chain creation via automated agriculture is desperately needed. The agriculture industry functions in a global context that is distinguished by developed value chains and high production efficiency. In fact, the agriculture sector, in which the North ought to have established a unique competitive edge, mostly serves subsistence needs with little efficiency and little use of the potential provided by the value chain.

The manufacturing sub-sector, which was supposed to encourage agricultural output, has likewise fallen since the late 1990s. Because of this, the North is considered to be an uncompetitive region. Environmental changes and agricultural growth provide concerns for Northern Nigeria.

First, the rivalry for scarce land resources and the ongoing population rise presented obstacles to agricultural expansion. Settlements and agriculture have gradually expanded throughout time, a trend that has been observed across the nation. Comparably, there is little regard for the environment as deforestation persists, vegetation and land use patterns change and hunting has impacted and ultimately eliminated species in many areas, including the North. Second, there are significant indications of land degradation as a result of the natural environment going through an unparalleled era of change. The following are the principal obstacles to agricultural optimization in Northern Nigeria:

1. Low-quality landmass (declining fertility)
2. Low application of technology to optimize water resources
3. Poor rural population with no access to credit
4. Weak agricultural extension service delivery system
5. Low uptake of improved technology/practices among users
6. Culture of individualism and personal enterprises
7. Weak Linkage with Industry
8. Continuous decline in the number of secondary industries to absorb the produce of agriculture
9. Collapse of basic rural infrastructure
10. Unskilled labor force on agricultural enterprises
11. Mass drifting of active labor out of agricultural sector
12. Aged skilled labor without replacement
13. Decline of secondary industry (agro-allied)
14. Absence of organized institutions & structured market
15. Absence of a coherent land registering system and certification (STAND, 2017:42).

ii. Collapsing Industries

There has been an apparent collapse of industries in the north for the past three decades. The collapse of industries in the region has increased the intensity of multidimensional poverty in the north. The small and medium-sized enterprise sector is expected to act as the link between primary production and large-scale industrial processing and manufacture. This is, however, not the case in the northern region. From footwear industries to fabric manufacturing and essential goods-producing entities, the North is now bereft of industrial concerns, leaving many in wanton poverty, prolonged joblessness, and underemployment in a region that once boasted of all the robust and high-paying jobs anywhere one turned.

Sardauna's programmes on the industrialization of the north in the 1950s and 1960s were very successful as every province in the region was encouraged and empowered to fully utilise the benefits of its comparative advantage in production. For that reason, Northern farmers were prosperous because they were allowed to enjoy the price their agricultural products deserved in the markets. Consequently, multi-national corporations were in all major cities in the North and their wholesale and retail outlets such as Leventis, Kingsway, UAC, Bhojsons, Chelarams, UTC, Peugeot, Mandilas, Steyr, Tate & Lyle, Yamaco, NASCO, etc., flourished immensely (<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/09>). It was a good business climate as the Northern economy propelled people from all walks of life to patronise such corporations until the gradual decline of its splendour about three decades. Some of these mega stores began to shut down mainly due to low patronage and other factors. A few other industrial concerns that struggled to stay afloat could hardly do more than producing and selling confectionaries and groceries up to the late 1990s before winding up the business. According to Sanusi Lamido Sanusi:

As at now, agriculture in the North is under threat. From Borno, Yobe, Bauchi, Adamawa and other adjoining states are known for their contributions to animal production that supplied meat, milk, hides and skin for many leather and shoe factories across the globe, the story is no longer the same. The incessant criminal activities by rustlers and conflicts worsened by terrorist attacks have made farming and animal husbandry unattractive (<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/09>).

In the central and northwest regions of Nigeria, including cities such as Kano, Kaduna, Zaria, and Gusau, the once-thriving textile mills now stand silent, akin to a graveyard. Alhaji Sabiu Danmaliki Sabon Garin Kakuri, a titleholder from Kaduna who grew up in the Kakuri industrial area, recalls the establishment of the first textile industry in Northern Nigeria. Founded in 1957 by Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, Kaduna Textiles Limited (KTL) marked the beginning of a textile industry boom in Kaduna, Kano, Funtua, and Gusau. At its peak, Kaduna alone boasted over ten flourishing textile companies, with similar success in Kano, Funtua, and Gusau.

During the 1980s, these textile industries provided approximately 500,000 direct jobs, making them the second largest employers in the region after the government. However, the situation has drastically changed, with most textile companies in Kaduna and other parts of the region closing down. Currently, only United Nigeria Textiles Limited (UNTL), which received a lifeline from the Bank of Industry in 2010, and Chellco, a garment factory producing blankets, remain operational in Kaduna. Similarly, Kano has only one active textile company left. As industries have dwindled

and government job cuts have continued, the region's unemployed youths have been left with limited options, often competing for positions in the Nigerian Armed Forces.

iii. Corruption

The definition of corruption is behavior that deviates from the expected responsibilities of a public position due to personal connections (family, close friends), financial gain, or status violations. It can also involve breaking laws prohibiting the maintenance of particular kinds of private relationships. This covers actions like bribery, which is the use of money to influence the opinion of someone in a position of trust; nepotism, which is the giving of favors based on a close relationship rather than merit; and misappropriation, which is the unlawful taking of public funds for personal gain.

Nigeria has a high Corruption Perception Index score but a low Human Development Index score, suggesting that there is little investment in the welfare of the populace due to the high level of corruption. Certain states have greater rates of poverty than others whose state governors used public cash wisely. These states' governors have been found guilty of abusing and turning public funds into private usage. The institutional ability of state and ministry governments to provide high-quality public services including infrastructure, health care, and education has been undermined by corrupt practices. The poorest Nigerians have the lowest health and education metrics nationwide, both in terms of service uptake and results. This is a clear indication of poverty. According to statistics, the likelihood of poverty is higher in the northern region of the nation than it is in the other regions. According to NBS, the northern region of Nigeria is home to the eleven states with the greatest rates of poverty, with Jigawa leading the list at 90.9%, and Oyo State having the lowest rate at 20.9%.

iv. Political Sycophancy

In northern Nigeria, mistrust in political leadership is on the rise due to political sycophancy. The politics of the "godfathers" have fostered impunity and corruption. This in turn leads to a situation of extreme poverty and persistent underdevelopment, which has multiplied and is now a breeding ground for radical organizations and insurgencies throughout the northern area. The political elite of Northern Nigeria, especially the state governors, have to act quickly and wisely to fulfill their pledges to fund social services like infrastructure and education. They also need to support the development of new revenue streams for the area. In the end, the north and south's economies, security, stability, and health are closely entwined, and the country's long-term prosperity is threatened by ongoing violence and extreme poverty everywhere in the nation.

v. Insecurity

The North's calm and hospitable demeanour had contributed to its prosperity up until the 1980s. Investors are scared away from the North because of the social friction that has been building over the last few decades, which is progressively robbing the region of its tranquil and pleasant culture. The new normal in the area is ceaseless violence, curfews, roadblocks, and security personnel harassing traders and transportation.

The recent insecurity in the North impacted negatively on the livelihoods of the society. Given the fact that farming is the mainstay of the local economies of the region, the disruption in farming due to bandit attacks affects agricultural productivity with serious implications for food security (FAO, 2020). Majority of the farming communities were forced to abandon their farmlands close to the forest as bandits exploited these locations to attack communities. Few farmers who stayed behind were subjected to taxation by the bandits before accessing their farms.

The increased flow of illicit firearms into the region has exacerbated bandit attacks on local populations, undermining investment and precipitating economic crises for individuals and communities. This violence has also had a spill-over effect on neighboring border settlements in Niger, disrupting inter-community and cross-border trade, which has historically been a cornerstone of their livelihoods.

Major local markets such as Jibia (Katsina State), Illela (Sokoto State), and Shinkafi (Zamfara State) have been severely impacted by ongoing attacks. These markets are strategically significant for both countries, serving as hubs for cross-border trade in essential commodities like maize, millet, guinea corn, and beans. However, the increasing risk of kidnapping has led traders to avoid these markets, significantly affecting the regional economy and society.

According to the 2019 Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET) report on food insecurity and market conditions, Shinkafi Market in Zamfara State operated at only 30 to 40 percent of its usual capacity during the reviewed period. Similarly, Dandume Market in Katsina State functioned at a reduced capacity of 15 to 25 percent relative to normal trading projections (FEWSNET, 2019).

vi. Dwindling Agricultural Production

The decline in agricultural production in the region has led to a dramatic increase in food prices, adversely impacting the purchasing power of local populations. Insecurity, characterized by armed banditry and cattle rustling, has forced farmers to pay between USD 100 and USD 10,000 to access their farmland, severely limiting food production (IOM, May 2020). Reports indicate that farming activities in Zamfara and Katsina states have been confined to a few areas,

resulting in a 60% reduction in food production (WANEP, 2020). Similarly, in Sokoto and Kebbi states, bandit attacks have led to the abandonment of farmlands by rice farmers. The resulting decline in income for local farmers and other vulnerable groups, particularly women, has diminished their ability to sustain their families, exacerbating poverty in the region.

vii. Border Closure

Cross-border trade between Nigeria and its ECOWAS neighbors, especially Niger, has been a longstanding feature in the region, facilitating the movement of industrial goods across borders. Nigeria, being the most industrialized and economically robust member of ECOWAS, is a major source of manufactured goods that find markets in border markets and beyond, including in Niger Republic. Niger's livestock and legumes are also prominently featured in Nigerian border markets, destined for Nigeria's interior.

However, the closure of the borders has had severe economic repercussions for communities along the Nigerian frontier. Many of these communities depend on both formal and informal trade activities conducted at the borders for their livelihoods. The closure has not only disrupted these trade activities but has also negatively impacted the broader regional economy.

In Nigeria, the border closure has particularly affected import and export businesses, with significant consequences for food security and employment. One of the crucial trade corridors, running from Kano in northern Nigeria to Maradi in southern Niger, which passes through Katsina, was integrated into the ECOWAS Cross-Border Initiatives Programme (CIP) to enhance regional integration. The closure has thus had a dual impact on both Nigeria and its neighboring countries.

Since the border closure in August 2019, border communities and cross-border traders have faced severe economic hardships. Trade has been redirected to seaports and airports, accessible primarily to those with substantial financial resources. The irony is that this border closure has exacerbated the food crisis in northern Nigeria, as the agricultural sector has struggled to meet the country's food demands. Essential food items such as rice, vegetable oil, fish, garri (mashed dry cassava), maize, millet, and sorghum have become increasingly scarce and expensive. This has led to soaring food prices, rising poverty levels, and increased hunger among many families.

viii. COVID-19 Lockdown

The COVID-19 pandemic has added to the existing layers of poverty in northern Nigeria. The pandemic and the lockdown that accompanied it has complicated the social and economic predicaments of the region as most of these measures were imposed with little warning, taking local populations by surprise and

leaving them to contend with the fallout with many people have had little opportunity to find alternative livelihoods. For many families, the absence of income for even several consecutive days can have devastating effects on poverty. The vast majority of the population in Nigeria's North-West lives in abject poverty with more than 60 per cent living below one US Dollar per day without easy access to health services and facilities (Editorial Note, *AfricaFocus*, 2020). Thus, cutting down the major source of people's income must have increased the chances of participating in criminal activities such as banditry. In the most parts of northern region, almost 80% of the population depends on income generated on daily toil for sustenance or what is called from 'hand to mouth'. Thus, prolonged lockdown had only compounded the problems for Petty traders, commercial drivers for urban and rural transport, artisans, the small-holder farmers who were hard hit by the lockdowns. The lockdowns have further badly affected the supply of manufactured products to the markets along the border areas.

5. Alternative Approaches to Mitigating Multidimensional Poverty

i. Addressing the Root Causes of Multidimensional Poverty in the north

With its extensive forward and backward links with other societal sectors, scientific research into the underlying causes of poverty in the north is desperately needed. The goal of this is to challenge decision-makers with a specific action plan that will address the debilitating effects of poverty before it gets out of control. As of right moment, it seems like state and federal governments are still struggling to acknowledge the crippling poverty in the north. In actuality, North must develop popular voice and device techniques to work with the federal government to lessen the widespread poverty. The governments, through collaboration with various stakeholders, should construct infrastructure, such as reliable power supplies, well-organized security systems, and decent roads, to foster an atmosphere that is conducive to growth. When these are accomplished, agricultural products from the North will feed all of Africa and beyond.

Invest in improving access to quality education, particularly for girls and marginalized communities. This includes building more schools, providing scholarships and incentives, training teachers, and promoting inclusive curricula that address local needs and realities.

ii. A Focus on the Non-Financial Aspect of Poverty

The focus of poverty needs to shift from the financial to the non-financial aspects, particularly in the North where people's sociocultural beliefs appear to be strongly entwined with their economic practices.

iii. Emphasis on Non-Monetary Poverty Factor

The International Poverty Line, which is currently used to assess monetary poverty and is set at

\$2.15 per person per day as of 2017, should no longer be the primary focus when establishing government programs or palliative care efforts. Instead, attention should be placed on the social consequences of the poverty factor. This method tends to understate the number of impoverished families, particularly in the north where there is typically a large income gap between households.

Address underlying causes of conflict and insecurity, which exacerbate poverty and undermine development efforts. This involves promoting dialogue, reconciliation, and peacebuilding initiatives at the community and regional levels to foster social cohesion and stability.

Support initiatives that promote livelihood diversification and economic opportunities beyond agriculture. This could include vocational training, entrepreneurship development, and access to microfinance and small business support services.

Foster community empowerment and participation through participatory approaches that engage local communities in decision-making processes, project planning, and implementation. Empowering communities to identify their own needs and priorities can lead to more sustainable and effective poverty reduction interventions.

Invest in infrastructure development, including roads, electricity, and telecommunications, to enhance connectivity, access to markets, and economic opportunities in rural and remote areas. This can stimulate economic growth, attract investment, and improve living standards for communities.

iv. Targeting Most Vulnerable Groups

Implement social protection programs that provide cash transfers, food assistance, and other forms of support to vulnerable populations, including the elderly, persons with disabilities, and households headed by women. These programs can help alleviate immediate poverty and improve household resilience to shocks.

Strengthen healthcare systems and infrastructure to improve access to essential healthcare services, including maternal and child health, family planning, nutrition, and disease prevention and treatment. This may involve building and upgrading health facilities, training healthcare workers, and expanding health insurance coverage.

v. Stronger and Effective Collaboration with NGOs and Private Sector

Instead of relying solely on government agencies, include the private sector in community development and poverty eradication projects. In order to carry out skill development initiatives, collaborate with NGOs and local communities. The private sector

may help lower unemployment and provide workable alternatives to poverty by providing training and job possibilities. In a similar vein, working with IT companies to provide jobs for young people in the area may help the region's economy flourish.

vi. The Need for Strong Collaboration with International Organizations

In order to combat the threat of poverty in northern Nigeria, there is a need to fortify and restructure cooperation between several international stakeholders, including the World Bank, the IMF, and continental and sub-regional organizations. Arrange collaborative training courses and capacity-building projects to improve youth education programs.

vii. Challenges of Mechanized Agriculture

Since agriculture is the backbone of the northern economy, it should be prioritized through mechanization and the encouragement of the application of technological knowledge, since this is the best approach in other developed nations.

Implement climate change adaptation strategies that help communities build resilience to environmental shocks and mitigate the impact of climate-related disasters on livelihoods and food security. This may include promoting sustainable agriculture practices, water management, and natural resource conservation.

viii. Taking the Geographical Context into Account when Designing Policies

The necessity of reviving the region's domestic businesses by endorsing domestic goods or taking into cognizance the geographical proximity of the region vis-à-vis neighboring countries. Policies aimed at regions close to borders should take regional cooperation mechanisms into account. The north's experience with border closures in 2019 and 2023 suggests that border regions in both splits have unique qualities that need to be taken into account. Shortage of food in one divide can easily be felt in another.

ix. Lessen the Difference in Development between the North and South

Reducing poverty in the North presents a challenge to policymakers seeking to bridge the poverty gap between the North and South. This may be accomplished by the national government putting more time and attention into meeting the demands of the North. The greatest way to combat household poverty at its origins may be to educate the kids. It is obvious that the North requires more government allocation for infrastructure in order to draw in foreign investment since, from previous experience, it lacks the financial resources needed to establish an environment for poverty reduction.

x. Expanding the Availability and Accessibility of Financial Resources in the Region

It's true that poverty has increased significantly in the north compared to the southern part of the country. The northern area has seen a periodic increase in poverty during the 1980s. This is mostly because small and medium-sized businesses receive little financial support. In the north, getting business loans and support is challenging because of several obstacles that are typically the result of financial institutions and guarantors. To lower the barriers to financial assistance, authorities must step in, particularly in regions with a larger concentration of young people living in poverty.

Mainstream gender equality and social inclusion considerations across all poverty reduction efforts to ensure that interventions address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women, youth, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups. This involves promoting women's empowerment, addressing discriminatory social norms, and ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The restoration of a robust, effective, operational, transparent, and socially empowering Northern Nigeria is contingent upon tackling the extreme poverty that has plagued the region. Based on this evaluation, the North's strategic standing both domestically and globally has been determined to be depressing and concerning. The region is steadily losing its comparative and competitive advantages, leading to sluggish development, high rates of unemployment, and a high incidence of poverty and its associated crises. The consequences of increasing poverty in the region have always been discontentment leading to lack of peace and tranquility. The alleviation strategies of the governments, as discussed in the paper, have limited successes, a situation that calls for rethinking and redirection to be able to achieve the desired goals of poverty reduction. It thus, offers certain recommendations that will help authorities and stakeholders to mitigate the multifaceted character of poverty in Northern Nigeria. As part of the recommendations of this paper, as the causes and levels of poverty vary by zone, the Nigerian government must respond quickly to launch anti-poverty intervention programs tailored to the unique circumstances of the states and local government.

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