
CHALLENGES OF POVERTY IN AN URBANIZING, IDAH KOGI STATE

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ABSTRACT

The alarming rate at which urban centres have grown over the past decades has had repercussions not only on the physical structure of the cities per se, but has posed daunting urban development challenges coupled with inadequate resources to manage the growth. This urbanization and its consequences thus pave way for poverty in the town (Idah). This paper is designed to examine the challenges of poverty with urbanization in Idah. Data were collected for this study using the survey research method. The result of the study revealed that the prevailing poverty in the area is due to natural and man-made factors. Amongst the recommendations made from this study is that the poverty rate can be checked through the re-orientation of the people towards entrepreneurial development.

Keywords: Challenges, Poverty, Urbanizing, Idah Kogi State

INTRODUCTION

The explosive growth of Nigeria's urban centres coupled with the inadequacy of resources to manage the cities pose daunting sustainable urban development challenges. The uncontrolled and unplanned growth had led to a proliferation of slum settlements. Most cities have very badly deteriorating infrastructure due to old age and inadequate maintenance (Fed. Min. of Housing & Urban Devt., 2006). Basic services such as water and sanitation, solid wastes management, transportation, health and education in expanding urban centres are inadequate due to incapacity to increase their provision at the same pace of expansion. Increasing urbanization provides potential for a significant contribution to the achievement of the international development targets because cities are centers of politics, culture, complex service provision systems, enterprise development and innovation. They create spaces where poor people can participate in a range of socio-economic and political activities, which can radically improve their well-being and status. They can also provide range of services (environmental, health, education, infrastructure, safety nets etc.) on an efficient and cost effective basis, which can provided benefits for poor people. These features of urban growth bring about problems of unemployment crime, insecurity, social conflict together with poor housing and urban poverty. Poverty has continued to be a persistent and pervasive issue in Nigeria and poverty reduction is today the over-riding concern of development perspectives in Nigeria which the Million Development Goals (MDGs) is set to address as it obstructs the pursuit of sustainable socio-economic growth. The poverty rate in Nigeria increased from 27 percent in 1980 to 66 percent in 1996. It is estimated that more than 70 percent of Nigerians live in poverty today. Nigeria's poor is said to account for 6 percent of the World's Poor, (Fed. Min. of Housing & Urban Devt., 2006). The many manifestations and dimensions of poverty include

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joblessness, over-indebtedness, economy dependence, lack of freedom, inability to provide the basic needs of life for self and family, lack of access to land and credit, inability to save or get assets. Most of this poor are engaged in this informal sector activities, (artisans, petty trading, food hawking, street trading, etc), where productivity and income are low. Poor people tend to live in dirty locality that put significant pressure on the physical environment contributing to environmental degradation. Kogi State in general is gradually witnessing urbanization and Idah being one of the urban centres in the state is not left out. In the past five years, there has been a structural growth in the town. This paper seeks to examine the challenges of poverty in Idah as it is gradually urbanizing. The point of departure of this paper therefore, is in solution seeking as regards measure for poverty alleviation for the people of Idah.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Poverty is central to the human settlement sector as housing and services have become market commodities only accessible to those with the ability to pay the prices. Urban poverty is invariably associated with over-crowded, unsanitary living condition within large slum settlements with limited or no access to basic utilities or services such as water, sanitation, affordable transportation, health care, education, energy and law and order. The town Idah which is gradually urbanizing in recent times is not left out of the many challenges of poverty. The high rate of physical expansion and population increase in the town with no corresponding activities to boost the economy and meet the needs of the people result to poverty. This area is devoid of industries, large market, agricultural activities and opportunities for better living. The town is characterized by some of the indicating factors of urban poverty such as – lack of access to credit for business, poor housing structures, inadequate employment opportunities, insecurity, poor health care, poor educational system, unhygienic living conditions, low quality public services etc. These characters could be traceable to the behavioral pattern of the people as they are very lazy and submit to white collar jobs. In spite of the presence of River Niger in the area, the activities around the river remains scanty owing to the lazy culture of the people. All they engage in is lazing about and enrolling for a programme in the Polytechnic to study at the expense of the future. As a result of this, a reproduction rate is very high and the need for housing and other facilities which brings about poverty occurs.

AIM

The aim of this paper is to examine the challenges that urbanization could pose to the people of Idah as regards poverty.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study in order to achieve the set goal are to:

1. Assess the economic base of the people of Idah.
2. Determine the factors responsible for poverty in Idah
3. Examine the impact of poverty on the growth of Idah.
4. Proffer solutions that will help to alleviate poverty in Idah.

The Definition and Measurement of Poverty

Conventional definitions of poverty are based upon either per capital income or consumption. A poverty line is defined based on a minimum level of consumption (Ravallion, 1992). Poverty is the state of one who lacks a certain amount of material possessions or money. Absolute poverty or destitution refers to the deprivation of basic human needs which commonly includes foods, water, sanitation, clothing, shelter, health care and education (Wikipedia).

Welfare Indices

Income indices of poverty have the advantage of enabling fairly ready comparison of the incentive of poverty over time or between places. But the important aspect of human well-being such as health, literacy, employment and access to basic services such as housing, clinics or schools is over-looked. In recent times, indices that take cognizance of such components of welfare have been developed for example UNDP utilizes a composite indicator consisting of three variables considered as the essential elements of life-longevity, knowledge, and decent living standards. These are measured by life expectancy at birth, adult literacy, and per capita income respectively, which are combined into a single index, the Human Development Index (UNDP, 1990). Dasgupta, (1993) as cited in Moser *et al* (1996) pointed out that such composite indicators bring a wider range of factors into the measurement of human welfare; however, they still do not consider such basic political and civil rights as political participation and justice.

Underlying Causes

Welfare indices which focus on the symptoms of poverty rather than its underlying causes and on flows of income rather than the distribution of assets.. The attributes of poverty- low income, poor health and illiteracy however, are themselves the results of processes that have their roots in economic, social, political and cultural factors.

METHODOLOGY

The survey research method was adopted for this study to collect information from the people of Idah especially adults. Five out of the ten neighbourhoods in Idah were sampled for this study. They are Igalaogba, Angwa, Ofiji, Ega and Sabongari. The sampling frame included youths, working class of all sorts, artisans, students, traders, unemployed and other inhabitants of the town who fall within the labour force. Proportionate stratified random sampling was used in the selection of the various populations that were sampled for the study, 150 copies of questionnaire were administered in the five selected quarters of which 30 copies were administered in each of the locations along side interviews so as to gather the necessary data required for the study. The data is presented and analyzed as thus:

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Table 1: The Economic Base of the People

Resources Base	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Farming	3	2
Fishing	3	2
Informal Sector Activity	15	10
Trading	10	7
Civil Service	12	8
Artisans	13	9
Okada Riding	10	7
Apprenticeship	6	4
Students	17	11
Unemployed	32	21
Politics	16	11
Water Vendor	6	4
Others	6	4

Table 2: Indication of Poverty in the Area

Indicating Factors	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Poor Soil Fertility	14	9
Absence of Industries	12	8
Low Economic Activities	20	13
Youths Apathy to Manual Work	22	15
Laziness	12	8
High rate of seeking white collar jobs	30	20
Non-challant attitude the work	22	15
The rush to obtain certificate from schools	14	9
Others	4	3

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that despite the developments witnessed lately in Idah, the land is faced with a high level of poverty. This is traceable to both man-made (cultural) and natural factors amongst which are:

- Poor soil fertility
- Land locked (dead-end) nature of the town
- Absence of industries
- Low economic activities
- Youth's apathy towards manual work
- Laziness
- Submission to white collar jobs
- Non-challant attitude to work
- The craze to obtain certificate from schools not considering what it could be used for.

The non-challenging atmosphere in Idah also encouraged the lifestyle of the people. The study also revealed that the study area is lagging behind in terms of developments, economic activities, housing types as compared to other towns of same era and with tertiary institution as Idah (Federal Polytechnic), e.g. Auchi,

Nsukka, Bida to mention a few. The level of poverty has so entrenched the attitudes (lifestyle) of the people that they see poverty as a way of life. The senior civil servants live in their grand father's family houses and are not bordered about the cosmopolitan (urban) lifestyle. The outcome of this study also shows that a greater percentage of the paid job (salary) they do ranges between ₦3,000 to about ₦20,000 and this they live on without additional income.

This prevailing poverty has passed on the town some of the following challenges

- Stunted Development
- High Crime Rate (Burglary Activities)
- High Level of Prostitution
- High Birth Rate
- Poor Standard Housing Types
- Non-Vibrant Economy-Absence of Shopping Mills, Plazas, Creational Centers, Standard Market etc.
- Discouragement of Investors
- Lack of Standard Hospitals, Schools etc.
- Dullness (Inactivity) in the Town
- Active Cultural Activities e.g. Masquerading, Festivals.
- Political Thugery.

CONCLUSION

The indicators of poverty line analysis based on household consumption do not capture all dimensions of poverty, especially from the view point of poor people themselves. Poverty is not defined solely in terms of low incomes, but also of a set of interlocking factors including physical weakness, social insolation, vulnerability and powerlessness. (Hossain, 2005). The poverty of a household is related to its resources endowments, its organizational capacity to manage and deploy its resources, its labour force position, the available coping mechanisms and external or family contingencies which affect it (Rakodi, 2002). Rural-urban migration does not create improved opportunities for a significant portion of urban dwellers living in slums as squatters. The town Idah being one of the major urban centers in Kogi State owes its poverty state to the fact that it stands as the recipient of the Ibaji migrants and other migrants from the rural areas around it. This act thus open up a cycle of poverty, illness and limited opportunities which can become a self sustaining process that passes from one generation to another, because we live in both natural and social worlds.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The urge for everyone in Idah to be engaged in a salary job especially in the polytechnic and other government offices notwithstanding the designation or the amount being paid is a contributing factor of poverty in Idah. To check this trend therefore, the people and the government have the following roles to play.

- There should be a re-orientation of the people towards entrepreneurial development.
- The indigenes that live outside the town should enlighten their people on the need to improve their standard of living in terms of housing and other social

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needs of the society especially as urbanization is gradually creeping into the town.

- The state and local government should make policies that will help empower the people especially women and youth to start up businesses and other self sustaining jobs instead of engaging them in political thugery. Incentives in the form of credit facilities sewing machines, grinding machines, tricycles, farm implements and farm inputs etc should be given to the people by the state and local governments so as to enable them be self reliant.
- The government at the federal level should try to open up the town by constructing a bridge on the River Niger to link the town with Edo State as this would attract more developments and investment from the people of Edo State and thus boost the economic activities and energize the town.

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