Thus, the advances of the sustainable development agenda have been gradual and limited. They depend directly on the political will of the states, not only for coming to agreements on goals, resources, and schedules, but also for their implementation, evaluation, and follow-up. The developed countries have bet on minimum goals and targets, at the same time that they avoid establishing specific, much more ambitious, inclusive targets and commitments.

Economic growth and monetary stability per se are not equivalent to less poverty. As long as the structural problems of inequitable distribution of income and wealth are not solved, it will be very difficult to advance in the fight against hunger and to reduce poverty, lessening the capacity to fulfill the Millennium Development Goals or any other, for that matter. It should also be pointed out that it is imperative to increase ODA; if what is really wanted is to reduce current inequalities; more precise indicators are required for evaluating poverty in the world. The problem is that the entire system of monitoring and indicators is part of the current economic growth paradigm and jibes with its discourse.

The liberal community that today’s world is part of, and its vision of the world economy, have generated a narrative with which individuals interpret their surroundings and assign meaning to their particular and social living conditions. This is why it is important to change that narrative, to allow world leaders, heads of state or government, to reformulate their interpretation of reality and therefore the way they design and evaluate public policies.

This is why a change of paradigm must be accompanied by a renewed discursive-conceptual framework, as well as new indicators to measure social well-being. Any measurement of advances in development and social well-being must go beyond the methodology limited to the economic-moneterist vision that reduces complex, multidimensional phenomena like poverty to a narrow conceptual construct from which minimal indicators are derived. For this reason, the discussion about defining new development goals must continue, so they can go beyond the categories of economic growth. A new set of indicators for poverty and other issues is needed which would mean a profound redefinition of international society, the state, and humanity itself.

The current crisis of the international system as a whole opens up the possibility of rethinking the relationship between state and market, and the neoliberal paradigm that has held sway for several decades. As the Brundtland Report pointed out at the time, “Sustainable development in the final analysis must rest on political will of governments as critical economic, environmental, and social decisions have to be made.”

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**NIGERIA: KEYS FOR SUSTAINABLE POVERTY REDUCTION**

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Nigeria is blessed with many natural resources like bauxites, gold, tin, coal, oil, tin, forest, water land, etc. It has the largest mangrove forest in Africa, third in the world, covering a total of 1,000 km² along the West Atlantic Coast of Africa (for environmental issues in the country, see national report). However, 70% of Nigerians wallow in want. In 2002 the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) ranked Nigeria as the 26th poorest nation in the world, and the situation is still unchanged.

Factors and causes of this situation are multiple, including inappropriate macroeconomic policies, negative economic growth, effects of globalisation, corruption, debt burden, low productivity and low wages in the informal sector, unemployment or deficiencies in the labour market, high population growth rate and poor human resources development. Other involved factors are the rise in the rats of criminality and violence, environmental degradation due to climate change, retrenchment of workers, the weakening of social safety nets and changes in family structure. Traditional family, in particular, is very important in Nigerian culture, but is currently an institution falling apart due, among other reasons, to migrations from rural villages to cities.

This multiplicity of challenges cannot be confronted with simplistic or reductionist solutions. To address poverty it is important to empower the poor people and to give them an opportunity in managing the environment and natural resources. As explained by the International Fund for Agricultural Development: “Empowerment is defined as the ability of people, in particular the least privileged, to: (a) have access to productive resources that enable them to increase their earnings and obtain the goods and services they need; and (b) participate in the development process and the decisions that affect them. These two aspects are related; one without the other is not empowerment”. With this in mind, it is clear that global strategies and policies for sustainable poverty reduction should integrate economic and environmental considerations.