

NIGERIA: KEYS FOR SUSTAINABLE POVERTY REDUCTION

Edward Oyugi

Social Development Network, Nairobi, Kenya

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 rates 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.