



Governance and Imposition of Poverty and Hunger in Nigeria: The Case Study of Rivers State Government, 1999 to Date

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Abstract

The paper attempts to highlight and analyse the various ways the government of Rivers State has systematically and ultimately imposed extreme poverty and hunger on the citizenry. It argues that the policies, programmes and projects put in place by the governors of the state from May 1999 till date have rather imposed extreme poverty and hunger on the people of the state. To drive home its position it first conceptualized poverty, hunger, policies, programmes, projects and citizenry. Second, it presented a graphic picture of how the state is being governed by highlighting the policies, programmes, and projects put in place by the government from May 1999 till date. Third, it examined the trend and spread of poverty and hunger levels in the state and observed that there is increasing trend and widespread of poverty and hunger in the state during the period under review. Fourth, it analysed the policies, programmes, and projects of the government during the period under review and observed that they are rather poverty and hunger imposing. So relating the effects of the policies, programmes, and projects of the government and the trend and spread of poverty and hunger levels in the state during the period under review, it concludes that the Rivers State government has, through its policies, programmes, and projects, systematically and ultimately imposed extreme poverty and hunger on the citizenry.

Keywords: Hunger, Poverty, Government Programmes, Millennium Development Goals, Federal Capital Territory

PAPER/ARTICLE INFO

RECEIVED ON: 01/08/2014

ACCEPTED ON: 11/12/2014

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

De. Ozy B. Orluwene, jp,
Good Wilson (2014)

“Governance and Imposition of Poverty and Hunger in Nigeria: The Case Study of Rivers State Government, 1999 to Date” Int. J. of Trade & Commerce-IIARTC, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 195-213

1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of poverty and hunger and how to alleviate poverty and hunger has attracted the attention of international organisations as well as national governments. For instance, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by 189 out of the 192 member states of the United Nations in the year 2000 are said to be the most broadly supported, comprehensive and specific development goals the world has ever agreed upon for tackling extreme poverty in its many dimensions.

The MDGs include goals and targets on income, poverty, hunger, maternal and child mortality, disease, inadequate shelter, gender inequality, environmental degradation and the global partnership for development. Adopted by world leaders in the year 2000 and set to be achieved by 2015, the MDGs are both global and local, tailored by each country to suit specific development needs. It is believed that world poverty will be cut by half, ten millions of lives will be saved, and billions more people will have the opportunity to benefit from the global economy if these goals are achieved. The first goal specifically stipulates the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger.

Nigeria is a member state of the United Nations and one of the 189, out of 192 member states that adopted the MDGs whose first goal is the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. And Rivers State is one of the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) that make up the Nigerian state. Consequently, in the spirit of the MDGs, Rivers State, like the Nigerian state is expected to be managed in a way to enhance the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. However, looking at the way the state is being managed or governed by the political class from 1999 till date, the goal of eradication of extreme poverty and hunger is not achievable in Rivers State. Rather, the policies, programmes and projects put in place by the managers or governors of the state appear to impose extreme poverty and hunger on the citizenry instead.

This paper attempts to highlight and analyse the various ways the government of Rivers State in Nigeria has through its policies, programmes, and projects, from May 1999 till date, the so-called democratic era, systematically and ultimately imposed extreme poverty and hunger on the citizenry. The paper is divided into six parts. Part one is, the introduction, followed by conceptual issues in part two. Part three examines the way the state is being governed while part four looks at the spread and trend in the poverty and hunger level in the state. Part five examines the nexus between the way the state is being governed and the level of poverty and hunger in the state, while part six is the concluding remarks.

2. CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Our focus here is to conceptualise poverty, hunger, policies, programmes, projects and citizenry, as their understanding will enhance our comprehension of the issues involved in our discussion on government imposition of poverty and hunger on the citizenry. So let us take them in turns.

2.1 Poverty and Hunger

To provide a concise definition of poverty is not an easy task due to its dynamic and multidimensional nature. This is the reason why Aboyade (1975) asserted that poverty, like an elephant, is more easily recognised than defined. Yet, Tella (1997) among others have stressed the need for a definition of poverty, arguing that any study of poverty must begin with

conceptualisation of poverty, in order to provide a focus by which we can determine the limits of our understanding. Thus, difficult as it has been, attempts have been made to define poverty. So, our concern here is to see what people say about it, so as to enable us provide a definition of the concept of poverty and its derivative-hunger.

The Encyclopedia Americana, Volume 22 defines poverty as insufficiency of means relative to human needs. Obadan (1997) defined poverty as a subset of the general condition of deprivation whose dimensions include poverty, social inferiority, isolation, physical weakness, vulnerability, seasonality, powerlessness and humiliation. In the same vein, the Nigerian Economic Society (NES) (1997) defined poverty as “a ravaging economic and social phenomena that manifests in the inability to acquire the basic necessities of life needed for a decent living, in low self-esteem and the absence of the means of self-actualisation”. It is in this light that Streeton (1979) and Black-Wood & Lynch (1994) conceived poverty as a condition of being unable to meet basic material needs encompassing food, water, clothing, shelter, education, health as well as basic non-material needs including participation, identity, dignity etc. Yet, for Ajakaiye (1998) a more comprehensive concept of poverty can be described as a condition involving the most severe deprivations and adverse occurrences that are closely associated with inadequate economic resources as well as inadequate social and cultural rights, liberty, freedom of religion and of association and the rights to reside in any part of the community.

This study, however, adopt with modifications, Streeton (1979), Black-Wood & Lynch (1994) and Ajakaiye (1998) conception of poverty. Thus, poverty is a condition involving the most severe deprivations and adverse occurrences such as being unable to meet basic material needs encompassing, food, water, clothing, shelter, education, health, as well as basic non-material needs including participation, identity, dignity etc that are closely associated with inadequate economic resources as well as inadequate social and cultural rights, liberty, freedom of religion and association and the rights to reside in any part of the community. This definition not only encompasses the other definitions highlighted above but equally exemplifies the nature of poverty. For instance, to lay bare the nature of poverty, Lester R. Brown cited in Jhingan (1996) succinctly put it thus:

In the LDCs poverty is abysmal. Unfortunately, it is not an economic abstraction, it is human condition. It is despair, grief and pain. It is the despair of a father with a family of seven in a poor country when he joins the swelling ranks of unemployed with no prospects of unemployment compensation. Poverty is the longing of a young boy playing outside a village school but unable to enter because his parents lack a few rupees needed to buy textbooks. Poverty is the grief of parents watching a three-year old child die of a routine childhood disease because they cannot afford any medical care, etc.

Having conceptualized poverty let us turn to hunger. Hunger, according to the Oxford Dictionary of Current English, is a feeling of discomfort and a need to eat, caused by lack of food. And for the BBC English Dictionary, hunger is a serious lack of food which causes suffering or death. Thus, simply put, hunger is the logical outcome of poverty. It is a manifestation of extreme poverty. Thus, hunger is derived from extreme poverty.

2.2 Policies, Programmes and Projects

The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines policy as a plan of action agreed or chosen by a political party, a business etc. In the same vein, the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary

English defines policy as a way of doing something that has been officially agreed and chosen by a political party, business or other organisations. Policy can also be defined as any course of action followed, primarily because it is expedient or advantageous in a material sense. The term policy may apply to government, private sector organisation and groups and individuals. Thus, seen from the government perspective, public policy is seen as a concept whereby the government will determine decisions, actions and other matters that will prove advantageous to society in general. Consequently, policies should be understood to mean the principles, be they values, interests or resources that underline the actions that will take place to solve public issues. In this context, policies are administered through state or federal actions such as legislation, regulations and administrative practices. The fundamental thing about policy is that it should be able to address the masses and reflect their social values. Policies have both intended and side or unintended consequences. Thus, the policy formulation process should include an attempt to assess as many areas of potential policy impact as possible, to lessen the chances that a given policy will have unexpected or unintended consequences.

A programme according to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary is a plan of things that will be done or included in the development of something. For the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, a programme, as a plan, is a series of actions which are designed to achieve something important. Thus, in our circumstance, programmes should be understood to mean government plans encompassing the series of actions which are designed to achieve some things that are important for the well-being of the people or citizens.

Both the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary define a project as a planned or carefully planned piece of work to get or find information about something, to build or produce something new or to improve something. However, a project is generally conceived as a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product, service or result. Thus, for our purpose, projects should be understood to mean the temporary endeavour undertaken by government to create unique products, services or results. Projects have shared characteristics which ease their identity, as follows: (i) projects are temporary in nature, with a start and end date, since the project is disbanded once the work of the project is completed; (ii) projects are unique since they are undertaken to create unique products, services or results; (iii) projects have defined deliverables, that is the measurable outputs which the project delivers; (iv) projects bring about a change. Because projects produce something unique, the world after the project will be different to the world before; (v) projects consume resources; and finally, projects have a business case since a project is not worth undertaking unless it achieves an aim in addition to its deliverables. In sum, projects and programmes are not developed in isolation but should reflect policy objectives, whether of government, business organisation etc. thus, policies, programmes and projects are interrelated.

2.3 Citizenry

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines citizenry as all the citizens in a particular town, state or country. Thus, citizenry should be understood here to mean the people of Rivers State, on whose behalf the rulers/governors or political class collect the monthly allocations for the state from the Federation Account over the years.

So, it is our assertion that the vivid picture of illiterate, hungry, malnourished, poverty-stricken and survival-oriented people presented above by Jhingan (1996) is the lot of Rivers people from 1999 till date as a result of the way (the policies, programmes and projects of the government) the state is being governed. The fundamental question therefore is: how has the situation degenerated to this level, given the billions of Naira collected monthly from the Federation Account by the governors on behalf of the people over the years?

3. GOVERNANCE IN THE STATE

Before we go on to discuss the way (i.e. highlight and analyse the policies, programmes and projects of the government) the state is being governed it is important to provide a historical brief of the state and the scenario that gave way to the way the state is being governed. Thus, created on the 27th of May, 1967 by General Yakubu Gowon's administration, through the instrumentality of Decree No.19 of 1967, the state has been in existence for forty-seven (47) years. Out of the 47 years of its existence, the state has passed through roughly 28 years (1967-1979; 1984-1991; and 1993-1999 periods) of military administration and about 19 years (1979-1983; 1992-1993; and 1999 till date) of civilian administration.

According to Today's TopNews (2010), the state has been ruled or governed by 15 Governors from 1967 till date in chronological order as follows:- (i) Lt Commander A.P. Diète Spiff (NN) 1967-1975; (ii) Col. Zamani Lekwot (NA) 1975-1978; (iii) Commander Suleiman Saidu (NN) 1978-1979; (iv) Late Melford Obene Okilo (Politician) 1979-1983; (v) Police Commissioner Fidelis Oyahkilome (NPF) 1984-1986; (vi) Col. Anthony Ukpo (NA) 1986-1988; (vii) Group Capt. Ernest Adeleye (NAF) 1988-1990; (viii) Col. Godwin Abbe (NA) 1990- 1991; (ix) Chief Rufus Ada George (Politician) 1992- 1993; (x) Lieutenant Col. Dauda Musa Komo (NA) 1993-1996; (xi) Col. Musa Shehu (NA) 1996-1998; (xii) Group Capt. Sam Ewang (NAF) 1998-1999; (xiii) Dr. Peter Odili (Politician) 1999-2007; (xiv) Sir Celestine Omehia (Politician) May 27, 2007-October 26,2007; and (xv) Rt. Hon. Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi (Politician) October 26, 2007 to date. However, of interest to us is the period May 29, 1999 to date because of its significant negative impact on the lives of the citizenry.

To start with, it is a known fact that the April 1999 general election that brought the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) into power both at the national and state levels after many years of continuous military rule was highly rigged. And as if that was not enough, the PDP-led government in the state, in order to hold on to power recruited, trained/retrained and armed youths of the state, preparatory to the 2003 general elections that earned the name "Carry Go". During the election, the various armed groups were let loose to ensure that PDP was returned to power both at the national and state levels, which they co-operatively did.

However, immediately after the election, the post-election song changed its tone, as the party stalwarts instigated one armed group against the other, in their competition to loot the state treasuries and share the oil money. Thus, while the party stalwarts were preoccupied with the looting of the state and local government treasuries and sharing the oil money, the various armed groups under different names such as cultists, volunteer forces, vigilantes etc were busy causing mayhem as they fought themselves for supremacy and/or ransacked entire communities, thus killing innocent citizens as well as creating refugees. The Reformer (2008) captured the situation in Port Harcourt vividly thus:

Modestly speaking, for over five years now, no one day passes in Port Harcourt, capital of Rivers State without criminals committing one heinous crime or the other, thus inflicting constant pains, misery and sorrow on innocent citizens and particularly on children. Call it abduction, kidnappings, organised armed raids, outright senseless killings, maiming, violent stealing on motor-bikes and you are correct.

Indeed, the above situation had been the common occurrences in virtually all the parts of the state since the PDP-led government came into power in 1999. The various armed groups later on metamorphosed into a common umbrella name "militants" with many bases in the creeks of the state and even extended to other parts of the Niger Delta region, such as Bayelsa and Delta States, from where they launched their abduction, kidnapping, hostage-taking and assassination operations and the attendant disruption of economic activities, apart from the loss of lives of innocent citizens. Simply put, the situation took a regional dimension and attracted government attention. Thus, the Federal Government in an effort to curtail the activities of the militants, formed a Joint Military Task Force (JTF) comprising the Army, Navy, Air-force and Police, and drafted them to the Niger Delta region, mainly in Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta States and the attendant loss of lives of innocent citizens in the cross-fires between the JTF and the militants, apart from the lives of both the militants and members of the JTF, as John (2008) aptly stated that: *There are reported cases of the JTF violating with impunity the serenity of community life and the fundamental rights of law abiding citizens. Every week, scores of innocent people are usually caught in the cross-fires and summarily dispatched to the great beyond.*

In addition to the loss of lives as described above, a lot of material resources were also committed in the process. For instance, the Weekly Star (2009) had it that the Federal Government had spent a whopping ₦400 billion on security in the Niger Delta area. So, partly as a result of the colossal losses in both human and material resources suffered by the Federal Government arising from the activities of the militants in the Niger Delta area, especially the destruction of oil installations and the attendant effects on oil production and revenue as the oil companies pulled out of the region (The Hard Truth, 2009); and partly to avoid the exposure of the sponsors of the militants who incidentally were PDP party stalwarts, the late Umaru Musa Yar' Adua-led government in 2009 introduced the amnesty deal with the militants.

Today, even though the militants have pretentiously surrendered their arms and ammunitions, and they are camped in different parts of the country at very huge financial cost, as over ₦ 50 billion was budgeted as allowances, there are still frequent cases of abduction, kidnappings and assassination in the Niger Delta area in general and Rivers State in particular, and have even extended to other parts of the country. So, given the above scenario, the stage was set for the Chief Executives of the State and their cohorts to put in place various poverty and hunger-imposing policies, programmes and projects. So our concern in the rests of this part is to highlight such policies, programmes and projects of the government during the periods (i) May 29, 1999 to 2007; (ii) 2007 till date as follows:

3.1 The 29th May, 1999 to 2007 period.

What could be identified as the pronounced policies of the government in that direction during this period included the following:

1. The policy of appointment and/or retention of commissioners and other political appointees based on the ability of such appointees to destabilize their communities. Consequently, the

most 'powerful' political appointees or 'super-commissioners' as they were fondly described in the state (Jack, 2010), were those from the Okrika, Kalabari, Abua, Andoni, to mention but a few axes, who were able to muster enough force to destabilise their communities and the attendant creation of a large number of refugees, as the 'boys' at the grass-root were rewarded based on the number of lives wasted and the resultant quantum of refugees.

2. **The deliberate policy of embargo on employment.** The government resolves not to employ people into the state civil service for the eight years except for the purposes of thuggery, assassination and other satanic ends. This policy was put in place to achieve two related aims. First, to conserve enough funds to cart away or effect the implementation of the training or retraining and arming of the 'boys', and second, to enhance the enlistment of the 'boys', since that was the only avenue for employment.
3. **The policy of co-opting the most powerful arm of the government-** the legislative arm (Joseph,2003) into the executive arm by appointing his houseboy as the speaker of the State House of Assembly for the eight years, and by silencing and/or cowing the rest members of the House with money and/or intimidation. Consequently, while the powerful political appointees were causing mayhem in the various communities in the state, the supposed mouthpiece of the people who chose to be quiet instead, was being paraded about by the Chief Executive as the best speaker of the decade, for being quite as the state was burning.
4. The policy of systematic elimination of and the attendant organization of state burials for prominent sons of the state who would want to question some of the happenings in government circles. For instance, the APP minority leader of the State of House Assembly, the National Vice-Chairman of All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) and the South-South National Vice-Chairman of PDP at the time was all eliminated so that government business could go uninterrupted, in line with this policy.
5. The policy of silencing the traditional rules with monetary incentives and car-gifts so that they aid and/or abet the destruction of their communities along with the powerful political appointees or they kept quiet while their communities and their subjects were being destroyed or exiled.
6. The policy of imposing unpopular laws on the citizenry. With the co-option of the powerful arm of the government into the executive arm, the stage was set for the easy passage of unpopular bills into laws, thus, imposing unpopular laws on the citizenry as well as approval of doubtful budgetary presentations. For instance, the subtle pushing of the Rivers State House of Assembly to passing into law the bill of payment of pension to democratically elected Governors and Deputy Governors in the state (The Beacon, 2003), which Sara-Igbe (2003) among others argued is illegal, is a case in point.

Finally, is the policy of empowering or enriching non-indigenes at the expense of the indigene. This policy was carried out through contract awards and donations. Prominent among the beneficiaries through the contract awards were Arumeni-Johnson, the Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer of Rockson Engineering Limited, an indigene of Edo State whom The Beacon (2002) described as an omnibus Engineer/Contractor and Chief Olusola Adekanola (a Yoruba man), as Internal Revenue Consultants.

Donations were freely made to universities, organisers of award shows, weddings, churches, child dedications and naming ceremonies, burials, thanks-giving services etc (Obodoekwe,2002; Fyneyface, 2002, and Inyeinang, 2003), that earned him the name Governor Donatus (The Beacon, 2002) and for which Joseph (2002) suggested the establishment of a Ministry of Charity and Donations Affairs. This explained why Ijuye-Dagogo (2003), described the administration as “a government of Odili, controlled by outsiders and for the benefit of outsiders”.

With respect to programmes, two programmes, namely the poverty alleviation and government-sponsored communal crises could be identified during this period. However, the more publicised was the poverty alleviation/eradication instead of poverty aggravation programme that it turned out to be, these trickled down from the federal to state level. In this programme, the poor people in the state were expected to be receiving ten thousand (₦10, 000) from the government every month for an undisclosed period of time, and tricycles (KEKENAPEP) were to be distributed to poor farmers ostensibly to enable them evacuate their farm produce from their inaccessible farms to the markets. However, the implementation ended up with names of few party faithful, including those abroad in Europe, in payment vouchers for the collection of the ten thousand naira for about three months, while the tricycles were distributed among the party stalwarts instead of the poor, and the tricycles were also used for transport in Port Harcourt metropolis as against the use by the rural poor farmers.

Although not publicised, the second programme is the government-sponsored communal crises had more devastating effects on the citizenry. In line with the first policy highlighted above, there was competition among the political appointees to destabilise their communities so as to continue to be relevant in Government House. Thus, Asari (2005) stated succinctly that:

What activated the crises was that some persons who were in government thought they were untouchable and went about causing problems....I am talking of people from Kalabari, Okrika, Andoni to Abua/Odual.

Equally, Anyalewechi (2002) reported that the war in Buguma was activated by the desire of some politicians from the area, notably Dr. (Mrs) Doris Fisher-Chairman of Rivers State Primary Education Board (RSPEB), Chief Pawariso Horsfall- Commissioner for Environment and Emi Membere-Otaji-Health Commissioner, to control the soul of Buguma politics, and to demonstrate to the governor their ability to deliver their constituency, since the government of Dr. Peter Odili has rewarded chieftain of certain thuggery groups with choice appointments which is a tacit approval given to thuggery by the Governor. It is in light this that The Beacon (2002) and Jika (2002) reported that the state has witnessed politically motivated assassination attempts, political thuggery, communal crises, all believed to be the handwork of desperadoes working hard to please the powers that be in the state.

Consequently, the communal crises engulfed the entire state and the effects ranged from creation of refugees as entire communities were sometimes ransacked by armed groups or cultists, loss of lives, insecurity of lives and property, abuses of human rights such as extortion, raping to wasteful wrong channelling of both human and financial resources of the state. (The Beacon, (2005, 2006) Daily-Champion (2008), The Reformer (2008), The Hard Truth (2005); Wilson and Felix (2008)).

With regards to projects, two projects namely the ‘Gas Turbine’ and the ‘Presidential Bid’ could be identified during this period. However, the more publicised was the Independent Power

Project (IPP) commonly known as the Gas Turbines. These were the Trans-Amadi and Omoku Gas Turbines with the attendant controversies that trailed them (The Beacon, 2002; Meju, 2002, 2003; and Inko-Tariah, 2002). Worji (2001) succinctly stated about this project thus:

The Rivers State Government has officially confirmed that its yet to-be-completed gas turbine project has already gulped ₦ 14.7 billion of tax payers' money. The project comprises two ten-megawatts units each, one at Trans-Amadi in Port Harcourt and the other at Omoku in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni LGA.

Although less publicised, the second project -'The Presidential Bid Project', like any other projects, equally gulped a lot of resources from the state. For instance, The Argus (2002) posed under its cover, a lead title "Odili Initiates Plot to Be Vice President In 2007, Appoints Tax Consultants to Settle Political Allies in Abuja, and Set Strategic Master plan for 2007 in Motion". Most of the strategic master plan for the 2007 included the donations, appointments of tax consultants to settle the political allies at Abuja and the acquisition of chieftaincy title both within the state and outside the state. Such chieftaincy titles included the Ogbuagu of Orashi Region; the Eze Udo of Ikwerre-land; the Emere Ajure of Eleme; Akukaha of Ndoni; the Ibiyekoribo of Kalabari; the Mene Korodo of Ogoni; the Deinpribo of Okrika, the Nwanne Di Namba of Oyigbo, all from within the state and the Obafuniminiyi/Yeye Obafuniminiyi from the Ooni of Ife, which Kiri (2004) put the cost of acquisition at between ₦180 million to ₦200 million.

3.2 The 26th October, 2007 Period till Date.

Even though it can be rightly argued that this is a continuation of the previous administration given that the present Chief Executive has been under the apprenticeship of the predecessor for eight years as the Speaker, there are marked differences in their approaches to achieve their common goal of impoverishing the citizenry. Consequently, the pronounced policies of the government in that direction during this period include the following:-

1. The policy of non-payment of workers' entitlements. For instance, the Teachers Salary Structure (TSS) which has been implemented by all other states in the country and for which teachers in the state went on strike in 2008, has not been implemented up till date, even as they have continued to demand for the payment of the TSS, duty post allowances among others (Brown, 2010). In the same vein, the promotion arrears of teachers in the state service are yet to be paid after a successful promotion interview in 2007 (Hart, 2011). Equally, the FGN/ASUU 2009 Agreement which all Universities both state and Federal have implemented effective from 1st July 2009 is yet to be implemented in Rivers state for the two state owned Universities - Rivers State University of Science and Technology (RSUST) and Rivers State University of Education (RUOE) more than three years after the effective date of implementation. The list is endless; is it the Primary Health Workers (Worji, 2011), Medical Doctors, Civil Servants generally (PH Plain Truth, 2011), or the retirees (Tanee, 2011)? Weekend Star (2011) sums the attitude of the government in this direction thus:
Amaechi has always denied that the state was broke, yet he goes a borrowing and has continued to deny workers in the state civil service basic entitlements including Christmas bonus and payment of minimum wage.
2. The policy of collecting the allocation to the state from the Federation Account, in advance through loans. For instance, Weekend Star (2011) had a lead page caption "₦250bn Loan Causes Uproar in Rivers State: RSHA under Pressure to Resist It". As the caption explicitly

stated, the uproar emanated from the state Governor's announcement of a plan to source ₦250 billion from the bond market to complete on-going projects. According to him, his desires to source for the staggering loan was not because the state was broke, but because federal statutory allocations come in trickles and are unable to deliver the projects as scheduled. It is important to note that he had earlier sourced ₦150 billion from the bond market which Rivers people would want to know how well it was utilised and the repayment schedule (Weekend Star, 2011).

3. The policy of co-opting the legislative arm of government into the executive arm. Like his master, his predecessor, the Chief Executive of the state has through financial incentives and intimidation bought over the State Assembly members, to pave way for easy passage into laws, unpopular bills, such as the Rivers State Public Procurement law No.4 of 2008, the Social Services Levy Law No.9 of 2010 etc (The Beacon, 2011), budgetary presentations and clearance/confirmation of nominees (Today's Topnews, 2011). This explained why chief Iwarimie said that the confirmation of Barr. Chinye as commissioner by the state legislature was a clear proof that the House of Assembly had become an extension of the executive arm of government in the state (Weekend Star, 2011).
4. The policy of deliberate resolve not to employ people into the state civil service. The previous administration that did not employ people into the state civil service for eight years, the present administration has equally thought it was not to employ even as the secondary schools in the state lack-teachers, as doing so would mean reducing the amount of money to be siphoned abroad. The implication is that for more than twelve years (1999 to 2013) there has been no employment in the state which they (the past and present Chief Executives) admitted on assumption of office in 1999 that the level of unemployment among the youth is the highest in the country (The Beacon, 2002).
5. The policy of imposing obnoxious laws on the citizenry. Prominent among such laws is the Social Services Levy Law No.9 of 2010 which the government is bent on implementing despite public disapproval right from the bill stage, including legal action against it by the Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (The Beacon, 2010).
Finally is the policy of imposing candidates on the people against their wish. For instance, the Weekend Star (2011) in trying to explain why mass exodus hit PDP in Rivers State ahead of 2011 elections noted that one of the problems bedevilling the party in the state was the penchant of the state secretariat in connivance with Governor Rotimi Amaechi to impose candidates on the rest of the party members. Equally, against public disapproval, the Chief Executive has continued to impose appointees on the citizenry such that he has been accused of recycling commissioners (Uchegbu, 2011).

With regards to programmes, there is only one but comprehensive programme of the government from 2007 till date that can be identified. This is the programme of "Demolition". This includes the demolition of private buildings, government establishments and water fronts. The demolition of buildings kick-started with the demolition of buildings tagged illegal structures all over Port Harcourt metropolis. These are mainly shops, workshops and other small business structures. This started with the demolition of houses along Azikiwe and Ikwerre Roads purported to pave way for reconstruction even when they were in goo state to the demolition of buildings to pave

way for the reconstruction of Ada-George Road, as well as for the construction of so-called Mono-rail are on-going.

The demolition of government establishments kick started with the demolition of Old UPTH (the famous Port Harcourt General Hospital) which University of Port Harcourt used as its temporary Teaching Hospital (UPTH). The demolition according to the State Chief Executive was effected to give way for a mega (100 beds) one, "the still-born Karibi Whyte Specialist Hospital", to use the words of Weekly Star (2010). After the demolition, the state Chief Executive suddenly realised that the soil tests and the size of the land do not favour the siting of the Karibi Whyte Special Hospital there and decided to relocate it to Choba, while the old UPTH site turns forest and feasting ground for snakes and other reptiles (Weekly Star, 2011). Next was the demolition of Obi Wali Cultural Centre to give way to Silverbird Cinema whose proprietors, it is rumoured are close associates of the state Chief Executive. At the end of the day all the sophisticated buildings that housed Obi Wali Cultural Centre have been demolished only to be replaced by only one building that housed the Silverbird Cinema. Equally, existing school buildings are demolished to give way for the construction of the so-called modern primary and secondary schools that in most cases could not be completed, and where completed, could not accommodate the pupils again because of a purported policy of 30 pupils per class in the modern primary schools (Worji, 2011). The story is not different for the so-called health centres.

Finally, the demolition of waterfronts in Port Harcourt kick started with the demolition of Njemanze Waterfront on Friday 28th August, 2009 where more than 17,000 people are displaced by the exercise (Tanee, 2011; and Ucheghu, 2011) and Abonnema Wharf Waterfront while the rests (e.g. Bundu, Elechi beach, Marine base, Nembe, Okrika, Enugu, Cemetery etc about 40 in number) (Ucheghu, 2011) were to follow later. For instance, Weekly Star (2011) with a news item titled "No Going Back on Waterfront Demolition-Gov. Amaechi" reported that the waterfront demolition exercise which seems to have been abandoned by the Governor Amaechi-led administration due to the condemnation that trailed it, is among the priority projects of the Rivers State government in his second tenure. According to the Chief Executive, the demolition of the waterfronts is on his administration's agenda because it needs urban renewal. It is important to note that the resolve not to go back on the waterfronts demolitions is coming in the face of objections from the public, international organisations like Amnesty International, the United Nations (Tubonimi, 2011), including court actions and the attendant court injunctions. For instance, Finebone (2011) reported the situation thus:

There are strong indications that the planned waterfronts demolition by Governor Chibuike Amaechi of Rivers State would resume in June 2011. The source further said that the government had vowed to resume the exercise irrespective of any court order or proceedings against the demolition exercise. It was also gathered that the government is making adequate arrangement to ensure that all forms of resistance are repelled during the second phase of the demolition of all waterfronts in Rivers State capital.

With regards to projects, the present administration has publicised the initiation and execution of a number of projects and for which billions of naira have been sourced from the bond market. For instance, the Weekend Star (2011) reported that some of the projects for which the first ₦ 150 billion was sourced from the bond market to execute and for which the next ₦ 250 billion would be invested were the Port Harcourt Mono-rail, the Karibi Whyte Specialist Hospital, the New

Campus of the Rivers State University of Science and Technology (RSUST), the UTC-Airport road project, and the Independent Power Project (IPP) otherwise known as the Gas Turbine Project which the present government inherited from past government. Others are roads, school buildings and health centers among others.

It is important to note, however, that the so-called projects embarked upon by this administration have attracted negative reactions from diverse quarters. For instance, Nsirimovu (2011) argue that such projects as the Mono-rail, New RSUST Campus, while the old Campus has no problem, the still-born Karibi Whyte Specialist Hospital etc are a product of bad leadership; the Weekend Star (2011) which posed a back page caption "What is happening to the Gas Turbine Project: Rivers People ask Amaechi" reported that the people of the state have continued to express worry over the non-completion of the state Independent Power Project (IPP) a.k.a the Gas Turbine, nearly four years of the administration of the present governor; and PH Plain Truth (2011) with a lead page caption "₦40bn projects Claim: Rivers Residents Tackle Amaechi, Say We can't see the Projects", reported that a cross section of Rivers residents said that they cannot see the projects that have eaten so many billions of naira as claimed by the government of the State, etc.

4.0 THE TREND, SPREAD OF POVERTY AND HUNGER IN THE STATE

The problem of dearth of data in Nigeria is not new. Thus, data on the spread and trend in poverty levels exist only at the national level, geo-political zones, size of households and educational level of household head at best (See table 1). It is not easy to come by data on the spread and trend in poverty level on state by state basis. Consequently, we have used extracts from the remarks, public statements etc of the Excellencies or Chief Executives of the state and the resultant public policy analysts' comments to approximate the spread and trend in poverty and hunger levels in the state during the period under review. Thus, according to The Beacon (2002), in his maiden broadcast on assumption of office in 1999 Gov. Peter Odili rightly remarked thus:

Great majorities of our people are poor and live in rural areas within communities with serious ecological problems. Seventy percent have no access to safe-drinking water. Sixty percent have no access to primary health care. Eighty percent of the population lives in crowded single rooms. The level of unemployment among our youths is among the highest in the country.

The above remarks implied that the governor on assumption of office knew the problems affecting the people of the state. But three and half years after assumption of office, The Beacon (2002) while assessing the performance of the administration remarked thus:

Gov. Odili has run a government marked by sheer wastefulness, brigandage, abuse of power, debilitating corruption and a general loss of direction and focus. Dr. Odili continues daily to plunder the state.

Table 1:- Spread and Trend in Poverty Levels in Nigeria

Levels	1980	1985	1992	1996	2004
National	27.2	46.3	42.7	65.6	54.4
Urban	17.2	37.8	37.5	58.2	43.2
Rural	28.3	51.4	46.0	69.3	63.3
Zone					
South-South	13.2	45.7	40.8	58.2	35.1
South-East	12.9	30.4	41.0	53.5	26.7

South-West	13.4	38.6	43.1	60.9	43.0
North-Central	32.2	50.8	46.0	64.7	67.0
North-East	35.6	54.9	54.0	70.1	72.0
North-West	37.7	52.1	36.5	77.2	71.2
Size of Household					
0-1	0.2	9.7	2.9	13.1	12.6
2-4	8.8	19.3	19.5	51.5	39.3
05-9	30.0	50.5	45.4	74.8	57.9
10-20	51.0	71.3	66.1	88.5	73.3
20+	80.9	74.9	93.3	93.6	90.7
Educational Level of Household Head					
No.Education	30.2	51.3	46.4	72.6	68.7
Primary	21.3	40.6	43.3	54.4	48.7
Secondary	7.6	27.2	30.3	52.0	44.3
Higher than Secondary	24.3	24.2	25.8	49.2	26.3

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2008) Annual Abstract of Statistics p.60

In the same vein, Joseph (2003) succinctly described the situation thus:

The Rivers State House of Assembly stands indicted for colluding with the executive to maintain a laissez faire system of governance that has impoverished, pauperized and grossly alienated a vast majority of Rivers People.....Such infantile, impetuous and risible response to the loud condemnation and disdain the Governor's dominations have attracted from well meaning people confirms the grand alliance between the executive and legislature to plunder the state while people wallow in object and distressing poverty, unemployment, ethnic fighting, and wanton politically induced blood-letting.

And finally, The Beacon (2002) remarked about the situation in the state with respect to poverty and hunger levels thus:

It is on record that three years after Odili came to power, he is yet to lift the embargo on employment. As a result, he has built up a reservoir of unemployed graduates in Rivers State. In Delta state, the government in the year 2000 employed over 3000 graduates into its civil service while Edo state recruited over 2000 teachers last year. Gov. Odili is deliberately keeping out new entrants into the civil service. This policy is simply creating poverty and spreading misery among families and Rivers people.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that increasing and massive poverty and its derivation-hunger have been prevalent in the state within the period 1999 to 2007. For instance, using self-rated lines, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2008) put the percentage of poor people in Rivers State at 72.60 by poverty headcount, while the non-poor were only 27.40 percent.

It is equally true that the situation has not changed for better, up till date as nothing has been done to address the poverty and hunger problem in the state. This statement is corroborated by the statement of the Chief Executive as reported by Uchegbu (2011) and comments from public policy analysts. For instance, Uchegbu (2011) reported that Amaechi said his second tenure he pledged would reduce poverty, noting that his first tenure did not tackle poverty in the state. Yet, while in his second tenure, Nsirimovu (2011) described the situation thus:

It is, therefore, not shocking that the governor of Rivers State amidst increasing terrifying level of extreme poverty, infant mortality, army of unemployed, impassable roads, hopeless educational infrastructure, unplanned project designs, and wastes, destruction of community values and traditional institutions, high level insecurity, goes ahead to request for a forty five million US dollar aircraft and was readily given approval by a perfidious House of Assembly.

Thus, it is obvious from the foregoing that there is increasing trend and widespread of poverty and hunger levels in the state from 1999 till date.

5. THE NEXUS OF GOVERNANCE AND THE LEVEL OF POVERTY AND HUNGER IN THE STATE

From the foregoing one does not need a microscope, binoculars or spiritual powers to see the link between the way the state is being governed and the level of poverty and hunger in the state as a few examples from the policies, programmes and projects of the state government will attest to this statement. Thus, starting with the policies of the state government we proceed as follows:-

First, war-torn countries, regions or violent crises-ridden areas often attract relief materials from governments and/or international agencies because of the poverty and hunger which refugees created by such wars or crises suffer. In other words, wars and violent crises cause poverty and hunger among the people. Consequently, the increasing trend and widespread of poverty and hunger levels in the state during the period under review is not unconnected with the government-sponsored communal crises programme that engulfed the entire state and the resultant quantum of refugees, courtesy of the policy of appointing or retaining political appointees based on the ability of such persons to destabilise their communities.

Second, the link between poverty and its derivation, hunger and unemployment has been highlighted by The Beacon (2002) as it asserted that the policy of placing embargo on employment is capable of creating poverty and hunger, and spreading misery among families and the people in general. It is important to note that the rulers of the state during the period under review (that is, for twelve years now) have not employed people into the state civil service, in line with the policy of deliberate resolve not to employ new people into the state civil service even though provisions are made in the annual budgets for new employment. Thus, the increasing trend and widespread of poverty and hunger levels in the state are equally attributable largely to the policy of deliberate resolve not to employ new people into the state civil service and the attendant built up of a reservoir of unemployed graduates in the state.

Third, although many oil companies abound in the state, the capital intensive nature of their operations do not permit a large workforce that constitutes a large market in the state. Consequently, the economy of the state is civil service-driven, with a workforce of about 46,000 workers (The Beacon, 2011). Thus, given the estimated population of 5,185,400 people in the state, this turns out to be a ratio of about 1 civil servant supporting 113 other people. This ratio has serious welfare implications if the civil servants are not treated well. Incidentally workers' entitlements, including Christmas and leave bonuses are not always paid, especially from the period 2007 till date, courtesy of the policy of non-payment of workers' entitlements. The so-called minimum wage is a scam as workers go home with sums ranging from ₦200 to ₦500 etc as the difference between their pre and post minimum wage salaries. Apart from the minimum wage scam, deduction of workers' salaries for no reason(s) is equally enforced by the government which has recently promised to stop such deductions from January 2014 (Metons-Joseph, 2014).

Consequently, the increasing trend and widespread of poverty and hunger in the state can equally be attributed to the non-payment of workers' entitlements in the state.

Fourth, given that the resources at the disposal of society at any point of time is limited, it means channeling the available resources for instance, to group A to better their lot implies leaving group B to worsen their lot. Consequently, when the resources of the state are used to empower non-indigenes, in tandem with the policy of empowering non-indigenes at the expense of the indigenes, there is little or nothing left to better the lot of the indigenes hence the increasing trend and widespread of poverty and hunger in the state

Fifth, ordinarily, it is only a bankrupt person or individual that can collect his/her salary in advance through loans. Thus, when a state government begins to collect its allocations from the Federation Account in advance through loans, as in Rivers State then that state is no doubt bankrupt, and a bankrupt state must necessarily expose its citizens to increasing trend and widespread of poverty and hunger. Rivers State is bankrupt (Onwumere, 2011) and this is the situation in the state where workers' salaries, as variable as the amounts are, from month to month, are irregularly paid.

Finally, a cursory look at the other policies such as the policy of co-opting the legislative arm of government into the executive arm; systematic elimination of and the attendant organisation of state burials for prominent sons of the state who would want to question some of the happenings in government circles; silencing the traditional rulers with monetary incentives and car gifts; imposing obnoxious or unpopular laws on the citizenry; and imposing candidates on the people, which are mutually re-enforcing, show that their design have implications for increasing trend and widespread of poverty and hunger levels in the state.

With respect to the programmes, the three programmes namely the poverty alleviation, government-sponsored communal crises and the demolition and forced eviction, identified during the period under review are not far from causing increasing trend and widespread of poverty and hunger in the state. For instance, the poverty alleviation or eradication programme turned out to be poverty aggravation one as the tricycles meant for the poor rather went to the rich. The government-sponsored communal crises resulted in the creation of refugees, loss of lives, insecurity of lives and property, abuses of human rights such as extortion, raping etc, and wasteful and wrong channelling of the state financial resources. The above scenario can only necessarily expose the citizens of the state to increasing trend and widespread of poverty and hunger. And the demolition of private buildings including shops, stores and other small business structures and the forced eviction of the owners, and the demolition of the waterfront communities and the forced eviction of the people, especially as alternative arrangement is not made for their accommodation must necessarily lead to increasing trend and widespread of poverty and hunger among the people.

With respect to the projects, the seven projects namely, the Gas Turbine, the Presidential bid, Port Harcourt Mono-rail, Karibi Whyte Specialist Hospital, New Campus of RSUST, Model Schools, and Health Centres and Road Construction etc identified during the period under review are equally not far from causing increasing trend and widespread of poverty and hunger in the state. For instance, the gas turbine is a conduit for siphoning the common wealth since it cannot be completed twelve years after it started, with billions that are budgeted for it every year. The

Presidential bid gulped so much money from the state treasury thus denying the citizenry the services they would have enjoyed if such money were put into productive use. The Mono-rail, the still-born Karibi Whyte Specialist Hospital and the New RSUST Campus are not only said to be a scam but equally described as product of bad leadership because they are not attainable and so they are a waste of resources. The model schools where completed, cannot accommodate the children, while in the ones not completed the children learn under trees since the old structures must necessarily be demolished before the new structures are started. And the state of roads in Rivers state alone epitomized poverty, hunger and sufferings on the people as they are not passable. For instance, Onwumere (2011) described the situation succinctly thus:

While the government says it is working roads, have we not been rocked and contravened by bad roads in Rivers State under Amaechi? Businesses were trapped, vehicles were damaged, and food damaged, property and people died because of bad roads in the state.

Thus, such projects must necessarily cause increasing trend and widespread of poverty and hunger in the state. In fact, the link between the way the state is being governed and the level of poverty and hunger in the state is summarised by Nsirimovu (2011) thus:

It is on this score, based on an eagle eye on developments around us that we noted very strongly that the all searching eye of the government of Rivers State since the transition of May 1999, looked to every part of the state, and every aspect of its revenue in which could be found and object either of acquisition or plunder. Nothing has been too great for the temerity of their ambition, nothing too small or insignificant for the grasp of their rapacity. It is most unquestionably true that this is one and principal cause of why Rivers citizens remain part of Paul Coulier's 'bottom billion' extremely poor, in the midst of abundance; the unparalleled outrage which some writers have referred to as 'resource curse', 'rentism', 'cronyism' et al.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In concluding, let us relate the issue of the way the state is being governed to the level of poverty and hunger in the state. It can be argued that a relationship exists between the way the state is being governed and the welfare of the citizenry. A number of policies programmes and projects which are the state governing apparatus, have been identified, highlighted and analysed. The analysis of the policies, programmes and projects of the state government during the period under review point to the fact that they are poverty and hunger imposing in nature or by their design. On the other hand, the emerging literature shows that there is increasing trend and widespread of poverty and hunger in the state which is traceable to the way the state is being governed during the period under review. This fact is corroborated by Nsirimovu (2011) assertion that "it is, therefore, not shocking that the governor of Rivers State amidst increasing terrifying level of extreme poverty and hunger, infant mortality, army of unemployed, impassable roads, hopeless educational infrastructures etc, goes ahead to request for a forty-five million US dollar air craft and was readily given approval by a perfidious House of Assembly. Hence, it is safe to conclude that the Rivers State government has systematically and ultimately imposed extreme poverty and hunger on the citizenry."

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