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Fragile Nigeria Economy and the Risen Poverty among Rural and Urban Men and Women in the Society

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Abstract:

Nigeria is well-endowed with natural resources but the fragility of the economy and risen poverty resulting from unemployment, mono-economy, insecurity; decadence infrastructural facilities, bad leadership and policy somersaulting are the major breakdown in the development of the country. Despite Government development strategies and initiatives, the economy keeps dwindling and poverty becomes inescapable for both rural and urban men and women in the society. As more than 80 million of Nigerians that is 64% of the total populations are living in poverty. The study used secondary data to investigate the risen wave of poverty and unstable economy with a view to finding the lasting solution to the demagogue. The paper reveals that the vast economic resources of Nigeria do not translate to development in Nigeria because of the over-dependency on foreign direct aids, corruption, policy somersaulting, lack of political and economic ideology and unemployment. Through this, the paper established a relationship between the uneven development in the society and fragile Nigeria economy as well as a lag between the rural and urban development among men and women. The paper recommended that, there is drastically need for diversification of the Nigeria economy, needs for improved technology and there is need for government investment in the infrastructural development of the country to provide for an enabling environment where business can thrive.

Keywords: *Development, poverty, fragile economy, women and rural-urban society*

1. Introduction

Poverty is an epidemic disease in Nigeria. It is a contagious disease and its effects are felt in every nook and crannies of Nigeria. The rural and urban communities in Nigeria are not left out as this has hampered every development initiative and strategy that can lead to meaningful and sustainable development. According to UNDP Report cited in Olaleye (2008), poverty manifestations in Nigeria are not limited to lack of income, but also productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods, hunger, and malnutrition, ill-health, limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness, homelessness and inadequate housing, unsafe environment; and social discrimination and exclusion. Supporting this assertion, NPC (2004) states that, about two-thirds of the Nigerian people are poor, despite living in a country with vast potential wealth...with 70% of the population had income of less than \$1 a day and 80% of the poor living in the rural communities and the figure has risen since then. This has shown the level of decadence in the Nigeria state with rural communities having the highest poverty ratio in the country. According to Ujamadu (2016), women suffered most from the situation as the poverty and hunger have remained high in the rural areas, remote communities and among female-headed households and these have cut across the six geo-political zones with the prevalence ranging from 46.9% in the South West to 74.3% in the North West and North East.

Despite the natural resources in Nigeria, the economy has dwindled steadily leaving the poor at the mercy of the state. This appears to be a paradox because the poverty level in Nigeria is as a contradiction considering vast economy in Nigeria with poverty rate in the country as small group of people in the rural communities are more disadvantaged than others and face the brunt of a poorly functioning public educational system, health, decadence in infrastructure, unemployment and insecurity. Little while, certain aspect of urban centers enjoyed the good road network, security, floating educational policy and stable power supply. The dysfunctional systemic Nigeria state face particularly challenges including weak institutions,

poor governance, political instability and ongoing violence in northeast, North Central and South Nigeria and even women and men are likely to be affected differently by the state fragility and gender roles may be important factors affecting the likelihood that state-building take place.

2. Theoretical Explanation

2.1. *Weak State Theory*

Different scholars have rationalized the position of dysfunctional state of the economy of Nigeria nation and the widespread poverty in the society on the weak institutional framework, governance and insecurity of the state. This rationalization is premised on the postulation of Buzan (1991) and Johari (2015). Deducing from Barry Buzan (1991), states comprise of three things: The institutional expression of the state (the bureaucracy), the idea of the state (the nation), and the physical base of the state (territory). According to Rand as cited in Johari (2015), a state is set to be weakened when it becomes ungovernable state with weak political institutions. It has four basic attributes which are (a) lack of state penetration evidenced by corruption, prevalence of informal economy, and absence of effective state institutions, (b) lack of monopoly of force indicated by illegal armed groups, criminal networks and population with access to arms (c) lack of border controls and (d) external interference (Johari, 2015).

To Buzan, weak states are those states where the idea and the bureaucracy is lacking leaving us with an ungoverned space whose territorial integrity is nonetheless enforced by international norms enshrined in the United Nations Charter (Buzan, 1991). The theory operates from the perspective of the rulers of the weak states. A deep examination of the situation according to Johari (2015), as it is prevailing shows that the nation state actually possesses rather limited control over their territories and boundaries, while claims to represents the nation state as spurious. It offers a disjunction or dysfunctional system that replaced institutional and actual transformation.

By analyzing actions in the context of the weak state, it is characterized with weak political institutions that are entangled with corruption, nepotism and political instability. The governing institutions lacked political will to implement policies that can stabilize the economy resulting in low or stagnant economy growth. In weaker states, the nature of government and its relationship to other actors means that the survival of the regime becomes practically indistinguishable from the survival of the state, while there are policy somersaulting and indifferent of government towards the aspiration of the citizens of the state. The theory provides a fulcrum for the justification of the loss of control by the Nigeria state of its territory or monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force, inability to provide public services resulting in ill-health, infrastructural decadence, mass illiteracy, unemployment and over dependence on the external communities for support leading to bad debt. The resultant effects of all these in Nigeria include widespread corruption, criminalities, the intervention of non-states actors, the appearance of refugees as a result of insecurities in the nation, the involuntary movement of populations of skilled workers and sharp economic decline.

2.2. *Women and Poverty in Nigeria: A Review*

All over the world, women juggle work and family, however Nigeria is no exception. Early marriage and family formation plays a critical role in women's access to jobs. And it is a very significant issue for young women from poorer households than others. Although girls are more likely to leave school early than men are. At age 20, less than 4% of men are married compared to about 50% of Women in rural areas (World Bank, 2016).

It is significant to know poorer families in Nigeria married before age 15 in Nigeria, although 18 years is the legal minimum age of marriage, this predominant in Northern part of the country. With early marriage come early pregnancies and household responsibilities that effectively removed women from labour market opportunities. Thus, early family formation associated with both early exit from school and fragmented into poverty of women (World Bank, 2016).

According to UNICEF (2017), Nigeria possesses a stark dichotomy of wealth and poverty, although the country is rich in national resources, its economy cannot yet meet the basic needs of the people such disparity between the growth of the GDP and the increase poverty is indicative of a skewed distribution of Nigeria's wealth.

The 2007 United Nations Human Development index ranked Nigeria 158 out of 177 countries. From the UNDP survey, 64% of households in Nigeria considered themselves to be poor, while 32 per cent of the households say their economic situation had worsened over a period of one year. The causes of the poverty include long years of military, dictatorship, corruption, political instability, poor economic policy, poor governance, and decadence in infrastructures, which manifested in poor health care delivery especially for children and women, and neglect in education due to decaying institutional infrastructure (UNDP, 2007).

Collaborating on the causes of poverty in Nigeria, Oke (2010) opines that, corruption, civil authoritarianism, and the abysmal economic failures culminated in serious infrastructural decay to the extent that most institutions of government were not working to expectation. The country' road, rail, electricity, water, postal and telecommunication infrastructure were in a state of decay and total collapse. In spite of the huge budgetary allocations made to the country's road infrastructure, most remained in a state of disrepair and, in the worst cases, were unmemorable all year round.

In 2011, the World Bank report places 17 million adult women were neither working nor studying and women with low levels of education dominated this group (World Bank Report, 2011). Even from the report, more women who were employed

worked in much lesser and lower productive levels in Nigeria, typically in farming or self-employment, or unpaid family workers in non –farming household enterprises.

Comparably, looking at 2016 Human Development Index (HDI), it positioned Nigeria at the base with 152 of 188 countries which put the country on Low Human Development (LHD). The country is followed closely by Cameroon in number 153 and Zimbabwe in 154 positions. The report places Nigeria below neighbouring Ghana and Zambia positioned at 139, Gabon 109, and Equatorial Guinea 135(Oladeinde Olawoyin, 2017).

A new report by the World Poverty Clock (2018) shows Nigeria has overtaken India as the country with the most extreme poor in the world. Among the top ten poorest countries in the world, Nigeria has the highest with 86.9 million people living in extreme poverty represents nearly 50%of its estimated 180 million population followed by India with 71.5million, Democratic Republic of Congo 60.9 million, Ethiopia 23.9million and Tanzania 19.9 million. The report shows that, despite the vast resources in Nigeria, poor management of the resources through corruption and incompetence has led to increase in the poverty in the society. The reports further show that Nigeria poverty profile is also the topmost in Africa after Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Mozambique, Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, South Sudan and Zambia (World Poverty Clock, 2018).

Ejumudo (2013) using available statistics of National Bureau of Statistics and CIDA 2012 reports to study Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Nigeria argued that women involvement in the industrial sector is estimated at 11% compared with the 30% for men, while women's participation in income generating activities that are predominantly characterized by intense manual labour like mining and quarrying is virtually non-existent mainly as a result of the gender-related perception concerning the social construction of labour and production-related activities in the Federal Civil Service, which is the largest single-entity employer in Nigeria, 76% of civil servants are men and 24% are women. Meanwhile, women constitute less than 14% of the total management level positions, while 17.5% of those engaged in the medical field are women compared with the 82.5% men. All these contributed to the stagnant level of women poverty in the society as the socio-economic activities that to lift women out of poverty are ruse.

Contributing to the contradicting situation in the country, Ucha (2010) argued that Nigeria's infant mortality rate has been estimated to be currently 99 per 1000 births, which implies that Nigeria has the thirteenth highest infant mortality rate in the world. The infant mortality of children under the age of 5 was 189 per 1000 births in 2007. These high mortality rates are mostly due to mothers not having enough money to take care of their children. Many mothers are also ignorant of some preventive measures such as immunizations and vaccines. The immunization rate against diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus (DPT) for children between 12-23 months was about 54 percent in 2007. Many children in Nigeria die as a result of malaria, diarrhea, tetanus and similar diseases. Most of these are preventable and curable diseases, but due to inadequate health care facilities and lack of money far too many children die off from them. Table 1: Poverty Profile According to Rural/Urban

Year	Urban	Rural
1980	17.2	23.3
1985	37.8	51.4
1992	37.5	46.0
1996	58.2	69.3
2004	43.2	63.3

Table 1

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2005

From the above table in support of Ejumudo (2013) assertion, it is evident that while urban poverty stood at 17.2% in 1980, it increased thereafter to 37.8% in 1985, 58.2% in 1992and declined to 43.2% in 2004. Similarly, rural poverty grew from 23.3% in 1980, to 51.4% in 1985. It declines to 46.0% in 1992 and this was rubbished by phenomenon raised to 69.3% in 1996. The trend in its rise in rural areas of the country was not abated as it stood still at 63.3% in 2004. What is evident in these comparisons is that while urban poverty, though steadily rising between 1985 and 1996, it witnessed significant decline in 2004, in which same cannot be said about rural poverty which kept increase at near geometric progression, thus making the gap between rural and urban poverty to be more pronounced. And given the nature of the county where people reside more in the rural areas and where the population of employed males more than females, the implication of this figure is brought into bolder relief.

2.3. The Fragile Nigeria Economy and the Risen of Poverty in the Society: A Nexus

Despite the Nigeria economy is grown as reported by National Bureau of Statistics in 2013 that Nigeria economy experienced a growth rate of between 7.36 per cent in the first quarter and estimated rate of 8.29 percent in the fourth quarter, the proportion of Nigeria living in poverty is increasing every year. According to Ajodo (2013), since 1970, the country has earned at least \$300 billion from energy development and in 2005, it made \$450 billion. With about 40 million barrels of oil per day, this constitutes about 90% of the government's revenue and 95% of the country's foreign exchange earnings. Nigeria is the biggest producer of petroleum in West Africa and the sixth largest supplier of oil in the world. Yet the country is enmeshed in poverty with over 60% of the populations suffer hunger, deprivation and homelessness.

Ujamadu (2016) observed that Nigeria is well endowed with forest resources accounting for 2.5% of GDP. Nigeria has one of the highest rates of forest loss in the world. Between 1990 and 2000, Nigeria lost an average of 409,700 hectares of forest per year on average deforestation rate of 3.5% per annum. Increase in population and human activities like farming, construction, and cutting of trees, use of wood and effect on climate change lead to environmental destruction across Nigeria. Coupled with this, Nigeria is currently losing N868 million daily to gas flaring, as Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation NNPC, disclosed that oil and gas firms operating in the country are currently flaring 700 million standard cubic feet of gas per day (Michael, 2018). This statistic of gas flaring different from N2bn losing daily in previous years when the oil and gas companies in Nigeria are flaring 2.5 billion standard cubic feet per day with major stakeholder in this gas flaring by shell company (Michael, 2018). There is a clear notation that Nigeria resources is more of a curse than a blessing to the country, a country with vast human, capital and natural resources are wallowing in abject poverty, population keeps soaring higher, unemployment and underemployment is nothing to write home about and there is increase in crime rate, dwindle economic profligacy and the external debts retard the economic activities of the nation. Therefore, there is no figment of imagination when Nigeria was ranked 17th least weak and fragile economy in the world by Fragile State Index (FSI) in 2014 and the country to be watched before being collapsed. However, the country moved to number 14 in 2015, 13 in 2016 out of 178 countries ranked in fragile state index (Soludo, 2018). This means the country is only better off than Somalia, Afghanistan, Chad, Sudan and Haiti. The implication of this is that, the economy has grown from worse to worst, poverty and despair, insecurity and deprivation are pervading in the society. There is observable variance on the fragility of the Nigerian state and poverty in the society, these include:

2.3.1. Over Dependence on Foreign Aids and Importation

According to Kaplan (2008), in a fragile state like Nigeria, western aids have prevented any reorganization of the state so as to make it better suited to local conditions, this has resulted imposing western practices that are bathetic to development, leading to massive poverty in the society. Ujamadu (2016) opined a country like Nigeria cannot develop when she borrows money to finance recurrent expenditure cannot leave out of poverty. Collaborating this, IMF Resident Representative for Nigeria, Mati Amine expressed concern over Nigeria's capacity to sustain a burden which has reportedly almost double from N12.12trillion in June, 2015 to N21.75 trillion by December, 2017. In retrospect, the debt of N21.75 trillion (about 65bn) is alarmingly, also double the \$34bn debt burden which was considered unsustainable by 2005, consequently, despite our evidently dysfunctional economy with severe social and infrastructural deprivations, Nigeria coughed up over \$12bn to receive forgiveness of about \$18bn (Boyo, 2018). It means that, Nigeria external debts had risen from 20.4 percent in 2016 to 26.64 percent of total debt by December, 2017 which made revenue to be low. While in 2018, the Nigeria government has planned to borrow N2 trillion to finance budget thereby compound N21.75 trillion (\$65bn) existing national debt by December, 2017 (Boyo, 2018).

According to Ademola (2005) citing Aluko (2003), a debtor country is considered and entitled to economic assistance, debt forgiveness or debt relief from its creditors only if it pursues policies in accordance with what the market believes to be...policies which creates the enabling environment for the private sector, and for the efficient operation of the market economy as certified by the "Triad" and their agents, the IMF and the world Bank. Even the loans and foreign aids given to the developing nations like Nigeria, there is obligations expected from them to fulfill, the fact that the democratic system of government in Nigeria is not Africanized, and the economy is not Africa-oriented is because of the foreign loans and aids that plunged the country into despair.

2.3.2. Unemployment

Youth unemployment which is 42% in 2016 according to National Bureau of Statistics is very high, causing poverty, despair helplessness and easy target to terrorism. Consequently, 61.6% of Nigerians in the labour force (not entire population), aged 15 - 24 were either unemployed or underemployed in Q4, 2016, compared to 59.9% in Q3, 58.3% in Q2, 56.1% in Q1, and 53.5% in Q4 2015. Of persons aged between the ages of 25 and 34, 37.5% of that group were either unemployed or underemployed in Q4, 2016 compared to 35.9% in Q3, 35.1% in Q2, 32.8% in Q1, and 31.3% in Q4 2015. Thus, out of a total youth labour force population of 40.74million (representing 50.2% of total labour force in Nigeria of 81.15 million), a total of 19.3million of them were either unemployed or underemployed in Q4 2016 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

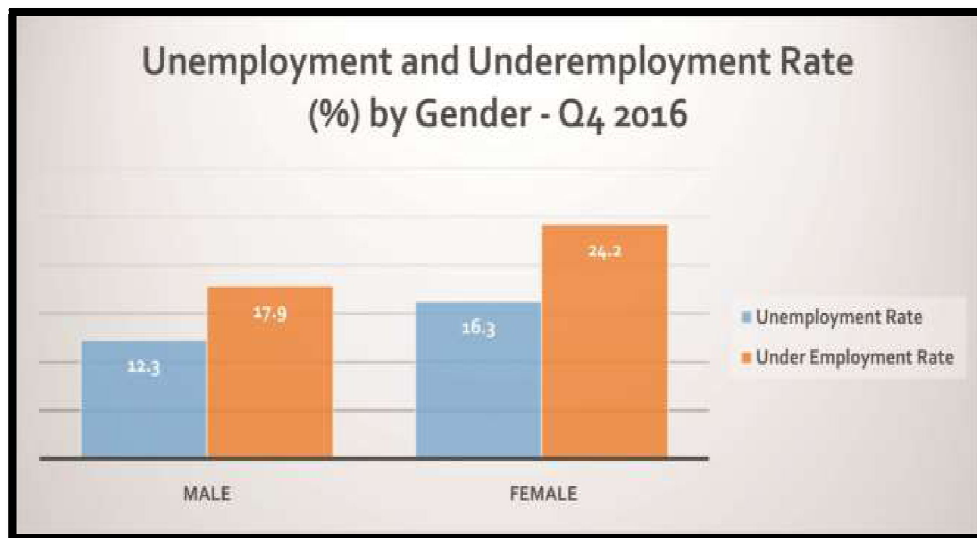


Figure 1
National Bureau of Statistics, 2017

The implication of the above diagram is that, there were high unemployment and underemployment females in Nigeria than males. Even, according to the NBS, (2017), the percent of rural to urban unemployment is higher. All these Underemployment continues to be predominant in rural areas, 25.8% of rural residents were underemployed compared to 10.5% urban of residents. Given that the nature of rural jobs is largely menial and unskilled, such as in agriculture and the likes, unemployment is more of a concern in urban areas where more skilled labour is required. The unemployment rate in the urban areas was 18.4% compared to 12.3% in the rural areas as the preference is more for formal white-collar jobs, which are located mostly in urban centers (NBS, 2017). Despite the oil revenue and exportation, the rate of unemployment in Nigeria keeps soar higher, resulting from unstable economy and political changes.

2.3.3. Illiteracy

Female literacy is seen as the key to raising living standard for the next generation. A newborn child is far likelier to survive if its mother is well educated. In Nigeria, there is stark contrast between the Muslim North and Christian South, in some Northern states, less than 5% of women can read and write, whereas in some Igbo areas more than 90% are literate (BBC, 2012). According to UNESCO statistics on literacy rate in Nigeria, over 65million Nigerians are illiterate with over 35 million adult illiteracy recorded in 2015; the implication of this, is that people who are illiterate far more likely to live in poverty, facing a lifetime marred by poor health and social vulnerability (Bakare, 2015).

2.3.4. Infrastructure Decadence

Nigeria is a country with a huge infrastructural deficit, it seems as nothing seems working well in Nigeria. According to Oke (2010), the country' road, rail, electricity, water, postal and telecommunication infrastructure were in a state of decay and total collapse. In spite of the huge budgetary allocations made to the country's road infrastructure, most remained in a state of disrepair and, in the worst cases, were unmotorable all year round. Soludo (2017) observed that no economy can develop without power generation. From the Soludo analysis, Nigeria power generation was part of the worst 10 in the world. See the table below for more analysis:

Table 1: Power Generation Capacity for 44 Selected Countries

Global Electricity Production - 2015

Highest ten			Lowest ten		
Ranking	Country	Megawatts	Ranking	Country	Megawatts
1	China	647,748	1	Algeria	8,436
2	USA	492,936	2	Chile	8,208
3	India	155,952	3	Belgium	7,980
4	Russia	121,068	4	Colombia	7,866
5	Japan	113,430	5	Romania	7,752
6	Germany	72,732	6	Kuwait	7,524
7	Canada	72,048	7	Uzbekistan	6,498
8	Brazil	66,804	8	Portugal	5,928
9	France	64,866	9	New Zealand	5,016
10	South Korea	62,244	10	Nigeria	3,762

Source: Global Energy Statistical Yearbook 2016.

Figure 2
Culled from Soludo, 2017

The table above highlights power generation capacity for 44 selected countries divided into highest 10 countries and the lowest 10 countries. Nigeria is understandably, is not only in the lowest 10 but boarded last in the list of the lowest 10. A country without infrastructural development cannot boast of developed economy and reduction in poverty.

2.3.5. Corruption

Corruption is a means of accumulating quick wealth in Nigeria, this occurs in diverse forms, and has contributed in no small measure to poverty and misery of large segment of the Nigerian population (Olaleye, 2008). The worst affected sectors are oil, gas, and construction where projects values are often very high and where minor officials on low pay are possibly susceptible to bribery in positions of power. Transparency International Corruption Perception Index in 2003 ranked Nigeria as the second most corruption nation in the world. Ever since then, Nigeria has been ranking first or second in the corruption nation of the world. This attests to level of decadence and ravaging poverty in the nation. Within the past two administrations in Nigeria, the high levels of corruption are nothing to write home about as this economy of the country is dwindling by the massive corruptions. These include: \$2.2 billion illegally withdrawn from Excess Crude Oil Accounts of which \$1 billion supposedly approved by President Jonathan to fund his reelection campaign without the knowledge of the National Economic Council made up of state governors and the president and vice president; NEITI discovered \$11.6 billion was missing from Nigeria LNG Company dividend payments. 60 million barrels of oil valued at \$13.7 billion was stolen under the watch of the national oil company, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, from 2009 to 2012; NEITI indicates losses due to crude swaps due to subsidy and domestic crude allocation from 2005 to 2012 indicated that \$11.63 billion had been paid to the NNPC but that "there is no evidence of the money being remitted to the federation account; diversion of 60% of \$1 billion foreign loans obtained from the Chinese by the Ministry of Finance, massive scam in weapons and defense procurements, and misuse of 3 trillion naira defense budget since 2011 under the guise of fighting Boko Haram. Diversion of \$2.2 million vaccination medicine fund, by Ministry of Health and diversion of Ebola fight fund up to 1.9 billion naira and the involvement of Babachir Lawal, the Secretary to the Federal Government in a N200 million contract scandal for the clearing of "invasive plant species" in Yobe State by Rholavision Nigeria Limited; a company he owns. All these attested to the high level of corrupt practices in Nigeria with the attendant effects on the masses.

2.3.6. Insecurity

Nigeria state is a conglomerate of protracted ethnic conflicts. The conflicts caused by the competition for oil resources and petroleum products, uneven development, unjust allocation of revenue from the federal government, environmental degradation and violence which all have their roots in the quest to control resources, thus engendering poverty, inequality and injustice in Nigeria (Iyabobola, 2015). However, most of the ethnic motivated conflicts in Nigeria especially, the Niger/Delta militancy, Boko Haram and Fulani herdsman crises were presumed to be orchestrated by poverty and poor distribution of natural resources and its effects in terms of economic and human damages further escalates poverty in Nigeria such as increase in mortality rate, destruction of natural resources and economic activities being paralyzed.

3. Conclusion

In a final note, the incongruence of poverty in Nigeria is compounded by the fact that oil revenue is poorly managed and distributed among the population, with higher government spending in urban areas than rurally. Also, the agricultural practices in the rural areas are basically subsistence driving for consumption with traditional implements for cultivation. Rural mechanization of agricultural practices is absent and the economy keeps dwindling as a result of the untapped resources available in the space. The indebtedness of nation Nigeria called for questioning despite massive resources and pervading corruption by political office holders in the country. No nation can be servicing debt and records development. According to Aluko (2003), a debtor country is considered credible and entitled to economic assistance, debt forgiveness or debt relief from its creditors only if it pursues policies in accordance with what the market believes to be... policies which creates enabling environment for the private sector and the efficient operation of the market economy as certified by the Triad and their agents, the IMF and the World Bank. It means from exert of Sam Aluko that a debtor nation is a slave to the foreign commands and her political and economic independence is surrogated to the western world.

Therefore, the study recommended that, there is drastically need for diversification of the Nigeria economy from mono-economy wherein oil industry takes preeminence to industrial-based economy drive by technological development. The nation needs to demystify from consumer-based approach of foreign direct investment to producer-based economy. The rate of importation of those goods that can be produced locally needs to be reduced drastically and discouraged to allow home-based goods to thrive. There is need for improved technology and there is need for government investment in the infrastructural development of the country to provide for an enabling environment where business can thrive. Infrastructure is a driven key to development of a nation; the government must ensure they invest in these social amenities like good road network, electricity and railway.

Finally, the government must invest massive in the education of women. It is a general belief that, illiteracy is a key to poverty among women and men in the society. It is believed that when women have equal access to education and go on to participate fully in business and economic decision making, they are driving force against not only poverty in the society but also gender equality which will raise household incomes and translate into better prospects and greater well-being of the children.

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