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How Corruption Contributes to Poverty¹

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1. ABSTRACT

There is widespread perception, even among street people, and development agencies (World Bank and USAID), that corruption is generally the cause of poverty. The topic of this paper, which was suggested by the Organizers of this Conference, also says that much. Though literature abounds on this subject, there is, as yet, no empirical evidence or unanimity among scholars to support the hypothesis that corruption is responsible for poverty even though, it is generally agreed that corruption fuels poverty!

The views therein have, however, raised relevant issues in the discourse, analyses, and classifications of the phenomena relating to corruption and poverty. These views range from the definitions, classifications, and characterization of the twin topics depending on the perspective, economic or governance, from which they are viewed.

This paper accordingly attempts to review existing literature on the subject of corruption and poverty. The issues generated by the review are related to what is on ground in Nigeria – the largest economy with seemingly the largest number of poor people in Africa. It concludes with the anti-corruption programmes which the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offenses Commission (ICPC) has crafted (especially since 2011) to address issues of economic growth, accountability in governance and governance services, education, and public trust in government which are believed to not only reduce corruption but reduce poverty as well.

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2. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has made significant economic advances in recent times. Over the last decade or so, the country has managed to sustain an economic growth rate of about 6-7%. This data meant that Nigeria not only grew far above the sub-saharan average of 5.6%, but was also the third fastest growing economy in the group of 10 emerging markets referred to as EM10, behind only China and India. Such rapid economic growth enabled the country to leap-frog from an economy of \$46 billion USD in 2000 to an economy of \$264 billion USD in 2013 (Enweremadu, 2013). Following a recent rebasing, the size of the economy soared to \$ 509 billion USD by the end of 2013, making it the largest economy in Africa. This rapid growth in GDP has brought two major effects. First Nigeria's per capital income has increased from about \$500 USD in 1999 to nearly \$3000 at the end of the rebasing exercise in 2013³. Secondly, there has been a revitalization of Nigeria's middle class. Indeed, two studies carried out in 2007 and 2010 put the size of the country's middle class as 16% and 30% of the population respectively (Ibid), which either way, would still represent significant progress giving that the country's middle class had almost vanished at the end of the 90s follow a disastrous Structural Adjustment Programme launched at the behest of the World Bank and IMF.

Yet, such improvements in macroeconomic statistics have however not pleased many Nigerians who questioned the relevance of an economic growth which has until now failed to translate into a reduction of poverty or increasing standard of living for a vast majority of Nigerians. Despite a multiplicity of poverty alleviating programmes and policies, poverty remain wide spread in contemporary Nigeria (Appleton *et al.*, 2008). Indeed, as a 2014 World Bank report noted, 'the country's performance is at odds with the general international trend of poverty reduction, in particular in other countries experiencing rapid

³ Nigeria's economic past was characterised by decades of weak economic growth (Okonjo-Iweala and Osafo-Kwaako, 2007) and massive decline in living standards (Appleton *et al.*, 2008). Over the period 1960 to 2000, annual GDP growth averaged about 3.3% (World Bank, 2009). Juxtaposed with an average population growth above 3% per annum, it implied a zero growth rate in per capita GDP over the years that resulted in a deterioration of living standards for most citizens.

economic growth like Nigeria' (World Bank, 2014; 16) . For sure, the issue of poverty is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. Almost all previous regimes have contended with the issue. By mid 1999, for example, when the country returned to democratic rule, the percentage of people who were considered to be below the poverty line (leaving on less than \$1USD per day) was estimated to be as high as 70% (Sela-i-martin and Subramanian, 2008). In recent times, however, the problem is receiving more serious attention of policy makers in Nigeria. This point was brought home following the devastating youth militancy in Nigeria's oil producing Niger Delta region and more recently the violent insurgency in the impoverished North Eastern region where a radical Islamic sect, known as *Boko Haram*, has decreed a Muslim caliphate killing at least 13000 in the process. Most Nigerians will easily blame the high rate of poverty in the country for these conflicts.

Although the Nigerian government has often disputed the claim that poverty is increasing in the country, and what constitute the actual poverty rate in Nigeria today remains a subject of considerable debate among development agencies and scholars, most statistics show that, indeed, poverty levels in Nigeria is unacceptably high. For instance, official data published by Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics shows that percentage of Nigerians living in abject poverty, calculated on \$1 USD per day, based on an adjusted purchasing power parity, had increased from 54.7% in 2004 to 61.2 % in 2010 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012). A recent report by the World bank figures suggests that poverty rates in Nigeria are significantly lower than estimates based on the 2009/2010 NBS study. In the Banks view, per capita poverty rate registers at 35.2 and 33.1 percent of the population in 2009/2010 and 2012/2013, respectively (World Bank, 2014: 17). This is still very high considering that Nigeria is a huge country. According to the World Bank, Nigeria with 7% of the world's poor people now ranks as the third largest contributor to the worlds poverty figures, next to China (13%) and India (32%) (Ogunbiyi, 2014).

The contradiction of rising poverty in a rapidly expanding economy has made Nigerian commentators to support the general hypothesis that corruption leads to poverty, or at least contributes to it substantially. According to this hypothesis, corruption manifests in many forms of waste and misallocation of resources by government officials which denies the down-trodden of vital social

services and infrastructures, indirectly fueling poverty. This viewpoint has however not been supported by much empirical studies despite the popularity of the two concepts in Nigeria. The few available studies carried out on the country's experience have sought to address the broader issue of corruption and economic development without focusing specifically on poverty (Olaniyan, 2005, Agbiboa, 2013; Enweremadu, 2013). It is against this background that this paper seeks to focus attention on the assumed link between poverty and widespread corruption in Nigeria. This paper will proceed by a review of existing literature on the subject of corruption and poverty. The issues generated by the literature review are then related to what is on ground in Nigeria- Africa's largest economy and one of the world's fastest growing economies but with seemingly the largest number of poor people in Africa. This is to be done through a systematic review of the phenomenon of corruption in Nigeria and how it contributes to fueling poverty. The paper will conclude with the anti-corruption programmes which ICPC (Nigeria's main national anti-graft agency) has crafted since 2011 to address issues of economic growth, accountability in governance and governance services, education, and public trust in government which are believed to not only reduce corruption but reduce poverty as well.

3. CORRUPTION AND POVERTY: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Although the debate focusing on the link between corruption and poverty has enjoyed much visibility in academic and policy circles for some time there is not yet any form of consensus either on the actual meaning of these two concepts or the relationship between them. In this literature review, we will start with the question of definition of concepts and then move to the relationship between corruption and development.

Definition of concepts

Beginning with the first concept, which is corruption, there are two main contending viewpoints as far as definition is concerned. The first viewpoint or class of definitions, which is the most common by the way, defines corruption as involving "the misuse of public office for private gain" or "abuse of public power for private gain". This is the definition privileged by development agencies such as World Bank, IMF, USAID, etc. Several scholars are also in association with this

definition (Bello-Imam, 2005; Heidenheimer and Johnston, 2008). The second class of definitions derived from a major flaw easily seen in the first definition, which is that the notion of corruption cannot be justifiably restricted to public officials alone, as the above definition has tended to suggest. To do so will, as Dommel (2003:10) has rightly argued, amount to ignoring similar abuses in the private sector. A more encompassing definition, they argue will therefore be that which accounts for corruption in both the public and private domains. Following from that critic, Transparency International has defined corruption as the ‘abuse of power for private advantage’ (cited in Ellis, 2012:1) Khan’s definition is also representative of this class of definitions. For him corruption means:

any act which deviates from the rules of conduct, including normative values, governing the actions of an individual in a position of authority or trust, whether in the private or public domain, because of private- regarding motives, (that is non-public or general) such as wealth, power, status etc. (1996:12).

In Nigeria the second definitional perspective appears to be more relevant as corruption afflicts both the public and the private sectors.

Just like corruption, there are also two major contending definitional perspectives on poverty. The first definitional perspective defines poverty basically in terms of income, which could be defined in several ways. One of such ways is to define it as a percentage of people living on an income of less than \$1 or 2 USD per person per day, usually in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP). Another way could be to calculate poverty as corresponding to the lowest income quintile in a referenced population. The first approach is however a more preferred one. But even that itself has many critics who argue that measuring poverty in terms of income will not fully capture the phenomenon (Chetwynd et al, 2003:6). According to this perspective, a broader definition which conceives poverty not as a one-dimensional issue but as a multidimensional phenomenon covering income, food intake, education, health, security, etc., will be more useful (Ibid). As Chetwynd *et al* argues, measuring poverty in terms of income level is relatively straightforward, while the multi-dimensional approach is more complex and involves factors that are difficult to quantify. However, this problem has been solved more or less by

the UNDP Human Poverty Index, which measures poverty in terms of life expectancy, education and economic indices.

Having reviewed the question of definition, we will now return to the issue of impact of corruption on poverty.

4. Relationship between corruption and Poverty

Here again there is little consensus. Although, there is widespread perception among street people and development agencies (World Bank, IMF, USAID etc) that corruption is generally the leading cause of poverty. However a survey of scholarly literature on the subject points to the fact that there is yet no empirical evidence or unanimity among scholars to support the hypothesis that corruption is directly responsible for poverty (Chetwynd, 2003;), nor is it even a major cause of the poverty plaguing many nations of the world.

On the one hand are found some scholars who dismiss the notion that poverty is a major cause of poverty. For instance, in a study focusing on Africa Ochonu argues that corruption is largely a symptom of poverty in Africa, not its original cause. Borrowing from the analysis of Jeffery Sachs, he concludes that the continents' poverty stems among other things from the environmental misfortune of poor soil, resource-poverty and uneven resource distribution (Ochonu, 2008). From a similar point of view, but with broader set of data covering Asia, Latin America and Africa, Walden Bello argues that it is not corruption but bad economic policies that create and entrench poverty. Bello was actually speaking about policies such as the neo-liberal structural adjustment programmes imposed on many Asia, Latin America and Africa states in the 80s and 90s (Walden Bello, 2010). More recently also, a cross national study comparing development in Sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia had also reached the conclusion that wrong economic policies favoring urban elites at the expense of rural farmers were to blame for Africa's poverty and slow development (Henley D, et al, 2012)

Standing against these views are those who argue that corruption has a major impact on poverty. Within this school of thought are found two distinct lines of thoughts. On the one hand are found few studies that have attempted to establish a direct relationship between corruption and poverty. Gupta *et al's* 1998 in a study for the IMF is an example (Gupta *et al*, 1998). So also is the African Centre for Economic growth 2000 study focusing on Kenya which advances that corruption is the main, if not the only, cause of poverty (African centre for Economic growth, 2000). On the other hand, we found majority of studies which argue that, although corruption may not be directly responsible for poverty, but it does fuel it. In other

words, corruption has only an indirect effect on poverty levels. Within this more prominent sub-school are found another two distinctive perspectives. The first perspective advances that corruption fuels poverty through its negative effects on economic factors such as economic growth, quality of government expenditures, foreign and domestic investments, income inequality, tax and government revenues, etc. This is also known as the ‘economic model’ (Chetwynd, 2003). The second perspective is what is known as the ‘governance model’, which argues that a higher level of corruption reduces governance capacity, that is the capacity of public institutions, which in turn, increases poverty rate (Ibid; 11). Corruption also fuels poverty through a reduction of the quality and quantity of public services (education, health, housing etc.) which benefit mainly the poor (Ellis, 2012). The first occurs because the energy of public officials are drained away by constantly engaging in corruption, while the second happens because corruption results in significant sums of public moneys being illegally diverted to private pocket. In another sense, widespread corruption contributes to poverty because it also leads to disaffection and distrust for the government, which may serve as a disincentive to engage in productive activities (Buscaglia, 1995)

Applying this perspective to Africa, one writer noted that:

“The embezzlement, mismanagement, or misapplication of public funds often leads to a cessation of certain social services, or the non-completion of a road, school, or hospital project. The deterioration and scarcity of infrastructure and social services have worsened in direct proportion to the corruption problem. The loss of public funds to corruption translates inevitably to a lack of medicine in a rural hospital; a lack of access to education for millions of African children; a lack of potable drinking water and electricity for millions of Africans; and a lack of good transportation infrastructure” (Ochonu, 2008).

In examining the impact of corruption and poverty in Nigeria, this paper will combine the two perspectives, that is the economic and governance models.

5. CORRUPTION AND ITS IMPACT ON POVERTY IN NIGERIA

Since its independence from Britain in 1960, Nigeria has grappled with the challenge of corruption. Many regimes have been toppled from power after being accused of tolerating corruption, or even engaging in it. Yet the scale and complexity of corruption have continued to grow. From rare in the early post-independence period (1960-1966), and widespread in the 70s and 80s, the vice gradually became systemic and institutionalized during the 90s, when successive authoritarian and unaccountable military regimes tolerated or even promoted it. Some of the most common forms of corruption seen in today’s Nigeria are

acceptance of gratification and other forms of inducements, influence peddling; embezzlement of public funds and conflict of interests, e.g. in the award of contracts by public office holders to cronies, family members and personally held companies. Others are bribery; extortion, fraud; nepotism, e.g. in recruitment/appointment and promotion of public servants; rigging of elections; misappropriation and conversion of public funds or properties for personal use; procurement scam; leaking tender information to friends and relations; diversion and misappropriation of funds through manipulation or falsification of financial records; payment for favourable judicial decisions, electoral and examination malpractices, etc. In recent times also, no institution or sector of our nation has been spared of corruption including, religious bodies, educational institutions, judiciary, military, MDAs, the private sector, and all the rest.

Instances of corrupt practices have been extensively reported in the local media. Others can be found in reports of dozens of official inquiries established by governments at all levels. Many academic studies have also been done. Further, over the last 10-15 years Nigeria's anti-corruption agencies have also investigated and successfully prosecuted several corruption cases shedding further light on the nature of corruption in contemporary Nigeria. Thus Nigerians have much reason to worry about the level of corruption and its effect on their society. Yet, contrary to widespread perception, not all of these forms of corruption have contributed to the poverty situation in Nigeria. For example, petty corruption, such as the extortion of petit sums by police men may have several implications for law and order, or legitimacy of government, but is hardly linked to the material situations of the poor in Nigeria. On the other hand, many other forms of corruption, especially grand corruption involving the diversion of hundreds of millions or even billions of dollars of public funds, can perpetuate poverty in many ways.

There are several; some are discussed here:

One example is the diversion of funds meant for poverty alleviation programs such as foreign aid, which reduces the amount of resources available for poverty eradication programmes. Although, in theory some of these resources could still be spent on other areas not related to poverty alleviation, even if they were not stolen. It is however more likely that a greater percentage will be available to serve the purpose for which they were intended. Corrupt practices of this type will then discourage donors from giving further aid. Nigeria is known to be among the least recipients of foreign aid, not only because donors perceive the country as relatively endowed, but its history of corruption also serves as a disincentive. Even if the country does not receive foreign aid, grand corruption may also affect the

government's own poverty eradication programmes. For instance, Government own funds or procured items for poverty alleviation can be misappropriated. The commonest example being fertilizers usually procured for small scale farmers but end up being diverted by government officials. This leaves the poor rural farmers poor even where their conditions could have been improved (Liverpool-Tasie *et al*, 2010: 12).

A second example is where grand corruption or the embezzlement or diversion of huge public funds leaves the population with poor infrastructure or none at all, further deepening their poverty. Examples of such infrastructure include health and educational facilities, and of course roads. In Nigeria, contracts are usually awarded for many of such projects, but in some cases, the projects will be abandoned after the contractors have collected huge amount of money, sometimes up to 100 per cent of contract sum. In 2007 the Human Right Watch published report on such type of corruption in Rivers state, one of Nigeria's leading oil producing states and geographic heart of Nigeria's booming oil industry. The report detailed the misuse of public funds by local officials in many of the state's local governments, and their harmful effects on primary education and basic health care. For instance the report observed that:

“In five local governments researched by Human Rights Watch in Rivers, local administrations have failed to make more than nominal investments into health care and education. Much of the money that could have gone into improving these services has been squandered or outright stolen. Human Rights Watch found that one local government chairman habitually deposited his government's money into his own private bank account. Another has siphoned off money by allocating it towards a "football academy" that he has not built. According to state and federal government officials, civil society activists and other sources, these problems mirror the situation in most of Rivers' local governments”(HRW, 2007:1).

Also in early 2007, a top grandee of the ruling PDP and former boss of Niger Delta Development Commission, NDDC (Onyema Ugochukwu), an interventionist agency created to address the problems of poor infrastructure and low standard of living in Nigeria's oil producing region, was arrested and arraigned before an Abuja High Court by the Economic and financial Crimes Commission, EFCC an anti-corruption agency accused of embezzling and diverting billions of naira. This was made possible by deliberately inflating several road construction contracts intended for some of the impoverished oil producing communities. Sadly, some of

the diverted funds were lost having been deposited in a local Societe Generale Bank which later succumbed to distress (<http://nm.onlinenigeria.com/templates/?a=9472>).

We can cite some examples in the energy sector also. In early 2012, probes by federal legislatures revealed massive fraud and corruption in the lifting of crude oil and importation of refined petroleum products by licensed private operators, commonly referred to as oil marketers, or the *Oil Cabal*. These fraud were usually perpetrated with the active connivance of government officials (Kalu, 2012)s. One of the consequences of these crimes have being that, in recent years, Nigerians, have grappled with the challenges of artificial scarcity and high cost of petroleum products, especially Kerosine, which is widely used by the poor. Similar problems have been experienced with electricity supply. In June 2012, a parliamentary probe of some recent power projects found that over \$16 billion USD had been spent between 1999 and 2007 without any visible improvement in the nation's electricity supply (The Guardian, June 30, 2012). At its peak, the combined electricity generation capacity stands at about 4000 megawatts. As a result, more than half of the country's 167 million inhabitants have no access to electricity, while the rest have to rely on expensive generators, run on diesel supplies controlled by a small and powerful cartel of importers (Reuters, 13 February 2012). Not only is electricity available to a small proportion of the population, it is also erratic in supply: up to 40 % of Nigerian firms' costs come from running power generators to cover for electricity shortages (Anaro, 2012). What this means is that most of the poor are shut-out from electricity to power their homes and more importantly their business which helps worsen their poverty.

Some types of grand corruption could also leave a large segment of the population without any form of social security/safety net. A few examples will suffice here. In January 2012, a top official of the Nigerian Police Pension Fund (John yakubu Yusuf) was convicted by an Abuja High court for embezzling N2 billion in one of the largest pension fund scam ever discovered in the country. His action will undoubtedly mean several retired officers will not get their pension plunging them into a life of penury post-retirement (The Nation, January 12, 2012).

Corrupt practices perpetrated by private sector actors may also have similar impact. In the early 1990s, most Nigerian banks launch into distress when it emerged that many bank managers had looted their financial institutions, through irregular and unsecured loans to themselves and cronies, or even outright stealing of depositor's funds. These actions not only plunged the entire economy into

economic crisis but also caused the loss of life-savings by many customers (Obi, 2007:133-134). Similar malfeasances were observed during the second banking crisis which began in 2008 following the global financial meltdown (reduction of capital inflows and massive capital flight) (Echebiri, 2011:52), which was compounded by gigantic frauds and unethical practices, including irregular loans and outright misappropriation of depositors funds. Most Nigerian banks were affected but the degree of exposure varied. The most implicated banks included the likes of Oceanic, Intercontinental, Bank PHB, Spring and Equitorial Bank. These banks were temporarily saved through a massive injection of public funds (about N620 Billion) by the Central Bank of Nigeria who feared a total collapse of the financial system. They were all later sold or liquidated. The consequences of the crisis on the Nigerian economy and the population were huge. Apart from the diversion of public resources to these banks, thousands of Nigerians lost their jobs and investments in the banks, thereby worsening the poverty level in the country.

All these cases discussed above clearly show that the loss of public funds required for infrastructural development, improvement in human capital and production capabilities, and health care, constitutes a roadblock to the realization of poverty reduction. In which case, the fight against corruption will be considered a strategy for achieving the objective of poverty reduction (Ibaba, I. S. and Ebiede, T. M. (2008). The question will now be what anti-corruption programmes are in place in Nigeria to that objective?

6. ANTI-CORRUPTION REFORMS AS A MEANS FOR ERADICATION POVERTY: THE ROLE OF ICPC

Following the successful return to democratic rule in May 1999, the Federal Government of Nigeria adopted a comprehensive anti-corruption policy to be implemented across the entire federation simultaneously. The new anti-corruption policy or strategy included measures like the enactment of new anti-corruption laws; establishment of specialized anti-corruption agencies (ICPC, BPP, and EFCC, NEITI, etc.) ; reform of public institutions, privatization of the economy, public reorientation, support and mobilization of civil society organizations,

signing and ratification of several international conventions and protocols such as UNCAC and other regional instruments to facilitate international cooperation and the recovery of Nigeria's looted funds, etc.

After the departure of the Olusegun Obsanjo administration (1999-2007), successive administrations have continued to pursue these measures which has resulted in progress in several specific areas germane to any anti-corruption initiative, including

- Investigation, arrest and conviction of several individuals
- Recovery of billions of dollars in looted funds
- Reform in financial systems and procedures by public institutions
- Improved rating of Nigeria on corruption and good governance surveys (such as CPI and Mo Ibrahim Good Governance Index) and better international image, leading to higher FDI
- Better public awareness of the nature and consequences of corruption and civil society participation in the war against corruption
- Increasing international support and cooperation resulting in signing of numerous international pacts and return of billions in stolen assets

I will like to dwell a little more on the achievements of Nigeria's anti-corruption campaign, especially in recent times, by looking at the specific contributions of my organization, ICPC, to the enunciation and implementation of Nigeria's evolving policies, strategies and measures against corruption.

The ICPC was established in September 2000 via the ICPC Act 2000 to spear the declared war against corruption. This Act in Section 6 (a-f) conferred on the Commission three broad duties or mandates

- i. To receive petitions alleging corruption, investigate and prosecute individuals for corrupt practices
- ii. To carry out studies and review of the systems and practices of public institutions and ensure that they are free of or not prone to corruption
- iii. To educate the public about corruption and enlist and foster their support in combating corruption.

The ICPC has a well-structured and relatively efficient administrative structure which enables it to carry out its mandate. Currently the Commission is organized into nine departments and six units – including departments of Investigation, Legal/Prosecution, Administration, Education, Public Enlightenment and Planning, Research and Review. It has a total of 805 staff spread between its headquarters in the FCT and 15 zonal offices. The Commission trains its staff every year and has established a training academy. Being a public institution ICPC is funded through annual Federal budgetary allocation, but occasionally receives support from international development institutions.

At its inception in September 2000, the Commission was buffeted by numerous challenges including financial, administrative, logistical, legal and political. Since then the Commission has moved to reinvent itself and consolidate on its past achievements. Currently, our Commission is directing its attention and energy towards achieving the three broad functions allocated to it by its enabling Act. For the sake of time, clarity and consistency, I will only discuss recent achievements along the three areas of the mandate of ICPC:

i. Investigation and Prosecution of Corrupt Individuals

As you all know, one of the principal function of an anti-corruption agency is to receive petitions bordering on corrupt practices and ensure the investigation and prosecution of corrupt individuals. Since the inception of our Commission, we have seen a sharp and consistent increase in the numbing petitions alleging corrupt practices coming to us. For instance from 339 petitions in 2001, the number of petitions received rose to 998 in 2008. By 2013, the number of petitions reached 1023. Within the years 2000 – 2013, the ICPC received a total of 9481 petitions, out of which 1444 were conclusively treated. Similarly, from a humble 4 cases filed in court by ICPC in 2001, the number of cases taken to court reached 52 in 2013, the highest number ever recorded. Unfortunately, the number of convictions recorded has not been as high, as we all would have hoped. The reasons for such low conviction rate are well known to all of us, prominent among which are the incessant injunctions granted to accused persons by our courts, especially politically connected people and legal provisions which are too protective of the rights of accused persons. But despite these inefficiencies associated with our judicial process, we have

continued to make progress in the area of conviction. Thus from a low conviction rate of 2 recorded in 2001, we were able to win 8 conviction in 2013. In terms of the total figure, the number of convictions won by ICPC stands at 54 as at the close of 2013.

ii. System Studies and Review of Public Institutions

One of the most important responsibilities conferred on our Commission by our enabling Act, which unfortunately many Nigerians have ignored, is the conduct of system studies on all public institutions. This exercise implies the comprehensive review of the systems and practices of public institutions in order to ensure that they are free of, or not prone to, corruption and other related malpractices. In pursuance of this objective, ICPC regularly sends competent and well trained officials to study selected public institutions that are believed to be prone to corruption, and where there were reasons to believe that such institutions have systems and practices that are prone to corruption, as has been the case in many instances, we have been working with the management of the concerned institutions to eliminate or reform such corruption prone systems and practices. As of today, our Commission has conducted systems studies/review in 208 public organizations, comprising Federal MDAs, state government owned institutions and local councils.

Even then, we are not relenting in our efforts. Many more of such system studies and review are planned in the coming years.

iii. Public Education and Mobilization

The trust of ICPC's public education and mobilization mandate is the resuscitation of the values of primordial Nigerian society which was noted for honesty, accountability, responsibility, communal concern, dignity, etc., and the infusion of integrity into public and private affairs. To achieve this goal, the Commission, in collaboration with the National Educational and Research Development Council [NERDC] commenced the National Values Curriculum [NVC] initiative aimed at infusing national ethics and values in the nation's educational system. The curriculum was fused into selected five thematic school subjects in basic one to nine and 12 subjects in post basic education and tertiary level i.e. colleges of education. As I speak Work is in progress to extend NVC to the Polytechnics and Universities through their General Studies Programmes.

Our public education and mobilization mandate is also intended to foster public support for, and involvement in the ongoing campaign against corruption. To realize this goal the Commission in 2003 inaugurated 300 anti-corruption clubs in secondary schools nation-wide and Anti-corruption vanguards in the tertiary institutions. The Commission has also established a National Anti-Corruption Volunteer Corps, [NAVC] which has registered about 12, 000 members. Similarly, the Commission's collaboration with the civil societies has culminated in the formation of National Anti- Corruption Coalition [NACC] which has registered 350 civil societies. Further still, our public education and mobilization mandate is being executed through the organization of numerous anti-corruption conferences, seminars and training workshops; grassroot anti-corruption outreach/Village square meetings, integrity lecture series, anti-corruption clubs, youth competitions, ICPC/NYSC collaboration); anti-corruption educational publications (coalition Digest, Integrity Training Manual, Anti-corruption handbook, Information Brochure, ICPC Monitor, ICPC Monograph Series, etc.). These initiatives are complemented with other public enlightenment measures such as online activities which enable us interface with media and civil society.

But while our achievements are growing by the day, it will be ingenious to suggest that Nigeria's battle with corruption in recent times have gone on without any hitches or challenges. Indeed, nothing can be further from the truth. For that reason, I cannot conclude this paper without mentioning some of the challenges which are still undermining our collective struggle to free our country from corrupt practices. Some of these challenges are the absence of a national coalition to support and sustain the anti-corruption war; delay in implementing legal and judicial reforms needed to expedite prosecution of corruption cases; limited capacities (human resources and equipment) of anti-corruption agencies and constant political interference by governments/official of public institutions. Others are inadequate funding to enable continuous recruitment and (re)training and better remuneration of staff and increase productivity and morale, and of course difficulty in attracting sustained international support and collaboration in the midst of competing priorities. These problems must be solved if we are to enthrone a transparent and accountable government and ultimately reduce poverty to a barest minimum.

7. CONCLUSION REMARKS

Despite a spike in economic growth rate, Nigeria still counts among the states with the highest number of poor people. From all indications, corruption has been one of the major explanations for this ugly situation. Several anti-corruption measures have consequently been conceived and are being implemented. However, several challenges have emerged which suggest that Nigeria's ongoing anti-corruption efforts need to be strengthened and sustained. How these challenges are managed will ultimately determine how far Nigeria can go in its efforts to eradicate poverty from among its people.

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