

MAKING POVERTY A HISTORY IN AFRICA: THE ROLE OF THE G8

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ABSTRACT

The issue of Africa living with the scourge of endemic poverty is not a recent trend. This is for the fact that poverty is one of the major factors defining the underdeveloped and developing third world societies worldwide and Africa in particular. Several factors have been identified in this study as being responsible for the perpetuation of poverty in Africa. These include war and armed conflicts, illiteracy, poor agricultural practices and land owning policies, poor water and sanitation, health and education, corruption, among others. The G8 we know is a forum of the eight leading industrialized nations of the world. In their summits, they have reached a number of policy agreements aimed at fighting poverty and eradicating it to the point of making it a history. There were theoretically some arguments for and against the dependence on exogenously induced economic measures to eradicate poverty rather than the endogenous measures. The dependency and the modernization schools of thought proffered their solutions to the scourge of poverty in Africa. In all, it was seen in this study that the G8 has made few efforts in line with debt cancellation, aids and technical assistance as well as in the areas of trade liberalization. All aimed at fighting poverty in Africa but it was discovered that these are not enough as their failures were numerous. It was therefore suggested that African countries should look inwards for the solution to their poverty. If not, if the G8 is really serious and committed there are many more things they need to do if they will actually help in making poverty a history in Africa.

Key Words: Permanent income hypothesis, Absolute income hypothesis, Consumption smoothing

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INTRODUCTION

For a continent so rich in natural resources and the population to work them, Africa seems to be perpetually mired in the most debilitating levels of poverty in the world. The reasons for this are many and often inter-related but a few major problems stand out to prevent this ancient land from rising to the levels of modern life it should have. African nations typically fall toward the bottom of any list measuring small size economic activity, such as income per capita or GDP per capita, despite a wealth of natural resources. The United Nations Development Report (2006) observes that the bottom 25 spots of the United Nations (UN) 'quality of life' index are regularly filled by African nations. It went further to state that in 2006, 34 out of the 50 nations on the UN list of least developed countries are in Africa. In many African nations, the GDP per capita income is less than \$200 US per year, with the vast majority of the population living on much less. In addition, Africa's share of income has been consistently dropping over the past century by any measure. In 1820, the average European worker earned three times what the average African did. Now, the average European earns twenty times what the average African does. (John Weiss, 2004). Although GDP per capita incomes in Africa have also been steadily growing, measures are still far better in other parts of the world, such as Latin America, which suffers from many of the same disadvantages. The greatest challenge to Africa is the existence of poverty on its land; which has led to the continent being considered as the poorest in the world. The cause of the poverty could be traced from its colonial history. In the beginning of the century, the colonial leaders, namely Great Britain, Germany, Portugal and other Western countries deliberately met and designed the national boundaries of Africa's countries to cause unrest in the continent. Artificial boundaries were deliberately drawn that split allied ethnic groups, and groups rival groups together. This was done so that the colonial governments could maintain control. It's a classic case of "divide and conquer". Unfortunately, when these nations gained independence, Danquah (2009) lamented, they maintained those old colonial lines, and one can see the results, most notably in places like Uganda, Nigeria, Somalia, Rwanda, Sudan, and even Ghana. It is therefore no surprise that the national government is rife with corruption at all levels with the people feeling more loyalty to their ethnic region than the national government in the midst of many other conditions of deprivations which further pushes the people desolately into the despotism of poverty with little or no hope of survival or escape from such conditions. In Africa, the poor are not only those with a lack of money, but also people in a condition, which involves the experience of shame, powerlessness, social, religious and political exclusion. The poor are people of overdue rights. They are people who are landless, homeless, starving and exploited. They are caused, shunned by others and condemned to live on the periphery of mainstream society. They are either unable to gain access to the good things offered by society or take part in public decisions. Unfortunately many national governments and responsive individuals have

tried to find an end or solutions to this situation in Africa but not much success has been attained. Questions have been posed as to whether if these solutions can not be found internally, could it be found externally? Hence, the call for concerted efforts of both the international governmental and non-governmental organization, to help let Africa out from this poverty situation. The extent this could be achieved has been questionably in doubt as we know that part of the problems that led Africa into this situation came as a result of the activities of the foreign nations or as a result of our contact with the west and their dictatorial policies and prescriptions. Such international agencies or organizations include the IMF, the World Bank, the UNO and recently the G8, among other organizations of the world leading industrial nations. All these have shown seemingly, commitments towards the eradication of the endemic poverty devastating the people of the African continent. The Group of 8 (G8) which metamorphosized from the G7, is a club of advanced industrialized states that meets annually to discuss important economic, financial and political issues that threaten the existence of mankind in the world especially in the less developed countries (LDCs). This organization provides a forum for these world leaders to work together towards finding solutions to the world's problems in the area of economy and globalization. In doing this, the G8 works closely with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), among others. The G8 agenda has evolved over the years, reflecting both changes in leadership, broader political and economic developmental challenges, among other things or issues. Unarguably, the G8 summits have discussed among others macro-economic issues such as international economic and financial management, trade and relations with developing countries and global issues such as climate change, etc. Unlike other world organizations the G8 has no African membership, formal rules, charter or permanent secretariat but in recent times, have shifted attention to Africa's problems. It is against this backdrop that this study intends to examine the extent to which the G8 through its policies and actions have attempted to address the problem of endemic poverty plaguing the nations and people of Africa with a view to making poverty a history in Africa.

The Concept of Poverty

The concept 'poverty' has been seen by different people from different perspectives. The Wikipedia free encyclopedia defines poverty as "the condition of lacking basic human needs such as nutrition, clean water, health care, clothing and shelter because of the inability to afford them". This is also referred to as absolute poverty or destitution. On the same note, relative poverty could be seen as "the condition of having fewer resources or less income than others within a society or country, as compared to worldwide averages". Jhingan, (2006:22 viii) examining the above concept vis-à-vis underdevelopment stated that poverty is reflected in low GNP per capita. According to the World Development Report, 1999-2000, 59% of the world population in 1998 living in low-income economies had GNP per capita of \$760 or less, 25.4% in middle income

economies had \$761 to \$9,361; and 15.0% in high-income economics had \$9,361 or more. The extremely low GNP per capita of low-income economics reflects the extent of poverty in them.

Furthermore, the World Bank Report pointed out a vast income disparities among nations. Among the low-income countries in Africa were Tanzania with GNP per capita of \$210, Nigeria \$300, Uganda \$320, Zambia \$330, Ghana \$390 and Zimbabwe \$610. Among the middle-income group are Kenya \$1,310, Namibia \$1,940 and South Africa \$2,880. Notably, no African country is among the high-income countries. As Jhingan (2006) further stated, it is not relative poverty but absolute poverty that is more important in assessing such economies. Hence absolute poverty is measured not only by low income but also by malnutrition, poor health, clothing, shelter, and lack of education. Thus, absolute poverty is reflected in the low living standards of the people.

Addressing the concept of poverty from a practical point of view, Michael (2007) expressed, "I know poverty because poverty was there before I was born and has become part of life like the blood through my veins". Going further he expressed Poverty is not going empty for a single day and getting something to eat the next day. Poverty is going empty with no hope for the future. Poverty is getting nobody to feel your pain and poverty is when your dreams go in vain because nobody is there to help you. Poverty is watching your mothers; fathers, brothers and sisters die in pain and in sorrow just because they couldn't get something to eat. As if the above does not aptly capture the real meaning and essence of poverty, he went further to add, Poverty is hearing your grand mothers and grand fathers cry out to death to come and take them because they are tired of this world. Poverty is watching your own children and grand children die in your arms but there is nothing you can do. Poverty is watching your children and grand children share tears in their deepest sleep. Poverty is suffering from HIV/AIDS and dying a shameful death but nobody seems to care. In conclusion he went further to state; the worst of it, Poverty is when you hide your face and wish nobody could see you just because you feel less than a human being. Poverty is when you dream of bread and fish you never sees in the day light. Poverty is when people accuse you and prosecutes you for no fault of yours but who is there to say something for you? Poverty is when the hopes of your fathers and grand fathers just vanish within a blink of an eye. I know poverty and I know poverty just like I know my fathers name. Poverty never sleeps. Poverty works all day and night. Poverty never takes a holiday. The above vituperations about poverty is aptly real as it explains the despicable conditions which majority of third world and African people live in without hope of coming out of it all through their life. Poverty and underdevelopment are often seen as the two sides of the same coin. Implicitly, both of them as conditions of backwardness are inextricably tied together as Siamese twins. Often times, poverty is seen as the main cause of underdevelopment. Staley (1984:13) defines an underdeveloped country as one "characterized by mass poverty, which is chronic and not the result of some temporary misfortune and by obsolete methods of production and social organization, which

means that the poverty is not entirely due to poor natural resources and hence could presumably be lessened by methods already proved in other countries”. This definition points towards some of the important characteristic of underdeveloped countries. Underdeveloped countries have unexploited natural resources, scarcity of capital goods and equipment, obsolete techniques of production and defects in socio-economic organizations which none can deny, always leads to low per capita income and implicitly poverty. As Jhingan (2006:22v) expressed, “perhaps the most satisfactory method of defining poverty is to discuss the question simply in terms of per-capita income – the average income available to citizens in the various countries”. There are circular relationships known as the “vicious circles of poverty” which tend to perpetuate the low levels of development in these poverty endemic less developed countries (LDCs). Nurkse in Jhingan (2006:31) explains the idea in these words: “It implies a circular constellation of forces tending to act and react upon one another in such a way as to keep a poor country in a state of poverty. As an instance, a poor man may not have enough to eat; being underfed, his health may be weak; being physically weak, his working capacity is low, which means that he is poor, which in turn means that he will not have enough to eat; and so on”. A situation of this sort relating to a country as a whole can be summed up in the trite proposition. “A country is poor because it is poor”. Hence it could be expressed in the following diagrammatic forms.

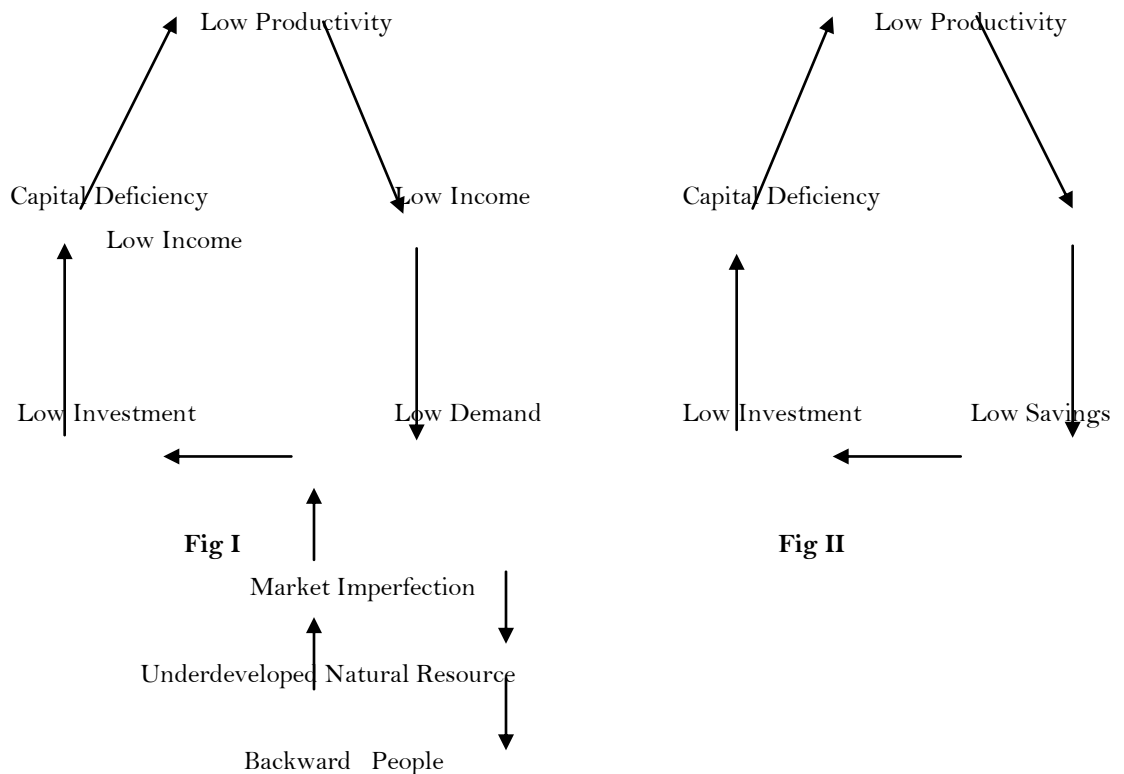


Fig III.

The above diagrams explain the vicious circles of poverty and underdevelopment. Explicitly, “poverty and underdevelopment of the economy are synonymous. A country is poor because it is underdeveloped. A country is underdeveloped because it is poor and remains underdeveloped as it has not the necessary resources for promoting development. Poverty is a curse, but a greater curse is that it is self-perpetuating,” (Bhattacharya: 2006:4).

Poverty in the African Continent: Causes and Consequences/ Effects

In Africa the causes of poverty mainly concern the reasons behind the low wealth and productivity of the poor or conversely, the shortage and inflation of the goods they consume. Even though the general characteristics of underdevelopment are not common to all these underdeveloped African countries, yet a broad answer to the question, “why a poor country is poor”, is implicit in these characteristics. A number of these characteristics are both the causes and consequences of poverty. The following factors analyze the natural causative relationships that inhibit development thereby engendering poverty in the African continent.

War and Armed Conflict:

War breeds poverty as no other product of man can do. One in every five Africans lives in a country rife with armed conflict. From local warlords seeking to expand their control, to national armies clashing with their neighbours or their own citizenry. Truly here the people can barely grow food enough to feed themselves. War destroys the infrastructure and prevents a build up of any beneficial works that may raise the people out of their condition. As observed by Brenth (2007), “war and armed conflict are the major causes of poverty in Africa. They have many effects such as displacing populations, destroying crops and forcing people to move from their land”. Hence due to armed conflicts in Africa there are millions of refugees who live on the edges of society, often in abject poverty. Undoubtedly, despite other hot spots of war, Africa consistently remains among the top places for ongoing conflicts, consisting of both long standing civil wars as experienced in Somalia and Sudan and conflicts between countries as seen between Ethiopia and Eritrea’s border wars after the latter’s independence from the former. Despite a lack of basic social services or even the basic necessities of life military forces are often well financed and well equipped at the expense of the masses’ survival. As a result of the above scenario, Africa is full of refugees, who are often deliberately displaced by military forces during a conflict, rather than just having fled from war torn areas like Daffour in Sudan or Kabinda areas in Angola to mention but a few. Although many refugees emigrate to open countries such as Germany, Canada and the United States, the ones who do emigrate are often the most educated and skilled. The remainders often become a burden on neighbouring African nations that, while peaceful, are generally unable to deal with the logistical problems refugees pose. With some conflicts having lasted for 20 or 30 years, some of these refugees haven been living in camps for decades with no hope of leaving

them. This situation means that they have to think only about surviving rather than being able to make long-term plans for their future and getting themselves out of poverty. In effect, civil wars usually have the result of totally shutting down all government services. However any conflict generally disrupts what trade or economy there is. As an instance, Sierra Leone which depends on diamonds for much of its economic activity, not only faces disruption in production which reduces the supply, but also ending up as a thriving black market in conflict diamonds, which drives down the price of what diamonds, are produced. Furthermore, war, political instability and crime, including violent gangs and drug cartels discourage investment. Civil wars and conflicts in Africa per se cost the continent some \$300 billion between 1990 and 2005. Eritrea and Ethiopia spent hundreds of millions of dollars on the war that resulted from minor border changes. (CBC News Report: 2007).

Mismanagement of Land/Land Laws

Another cause of poverty in Africa is the problem of land rights and ownership. Many African countries have a history of a one-crop production system and these crops are not suitable for feeding the population. These crops are non-essential crops intended for a “dessert economy” such as tobacco, sugar, coffee and tea, which are consumed in the West for pleasure.

The problem might not have been seen as simple as that. Implicitly, it is not just that the countries cannot feed their own people but that they have little or no power in the trade cycle. With so many countries producing and selling these goods and only a few buying, it is the buyers who can decide what price they pay. The poor countries are forced to sell as they have to repay the loans even when the prices are not fair. As these large industrial farms cover most of the fertile lands it prevents the average family from subsistence farming, so the average person cannot feed his family in the bad times such as times of unemployment. When you think that in some African countries unemployment is over 70%, you can easily understand how so many people are forced to live on less than \$1 a day.

The World Economic Forum (2006) observes further that the unwillingness of governments and feudal elites to give full-fledged property rights of land to their tenants is cited as the chief obstacles to development. Hence, lack of economic freedom inhibits entrepreneurship among the poor. The above notwithstanding, the nature of crops cultivated in Africa gives room to poverty creation. In addition to the dessert economy (cash crops) being cultivated in Africa, American settlers also introduced new staple food crops such as maize. Ignorantly, Africans readily accepted these new goods into their diets. The continent unfortunately, was not as accepting as its people. Initially, the new staple crops performed well. They produced great yields leading to increased acceptance and eventual reliance on these new sources of food. As observed by Ian Vasquez

(2009), “in time, this reliance led to food security/insecurity”. Two factors he observed led greatly to this outcome; water and fertilizer, both of which were lacking. African subsistence farmers traditionally did not irrigate, but relied on rainfall to water crops and planted multiple staple crops each season; some did well under dryer conditions, others under water. Experience shows that under ideal conditions, the newer staple crops out-performed the old ones. However, they were not as tolerant of the widely varying range of African growing conditions as the native crops, and in years “when there wasn’t enough water, an unirrigated field planted solely with a single drought–susceptible crop yielded nothing. Traditional methods of land use such as companion planting and post-harvest grazing by head animals enriched the soil at little monetary cost to farmers. Widespread adoption of fenced land monoculture depleted the soil. Despite large amounts of arable land south of the Sahara Desert, small individual land holdings are rare. In many African nations, land is subject to tribal ownership and in others; most of the land is often in the hands of descendants of European settlers of the late 19th century and early 20th century. As an instance, according to an IRIN report (2005), about 82% of the arable land in South Africa is owned by those of European descent. Many African nations lacks a system of free hold land owning. In others, the laws prevent people from disadvantaged groups from owning land at all. Although often these laws are ignored, and land sales to disadvantaged groups occur, legal title to the land is not assured. As such, rural Africans rarely have clear title to their own land and have to survive as farm labourers. Unused land is plentiful, but is often private property. Most African nations have very poor land registration systems, making squatting and land theft common occurrences. This makes it difficult to get a mortgage or similar loan as ownership of the property often cannot be established to the satisfaction of finances. It should be noted that this system often gives an advantage to one native African group over another, and is just Europeans over Africans. As an instance, it was hoped that land reform in Zimbabwe would transfer land from European land owners to family farmers. Instead, it simply substituted native Africans with ties to the government for Europeans, leaving much of the population disadvantaged. Because of this abuse, foreign aid that was destined for land purchases was withdrawn.

Misused Money

Over 500 billion US dollars has been sent to African nations in the form of direct aid. It is widely believed that the money has had little or no long term effect. In addition, most African nations have borrowed substantial sums of money. However, a large percentage of the money was either invested in weapons (money that was spent back in developed nations, and provide little or no benefit to the native population) or was directly misappropriate by corrupt governments. As such, many newly democratic nations in Africa are saddled with debt run up by totalitarian regimes. Large debts usually result in little being spent on social services, such as education, pensions or medical care.

In addition, most of the debt currently owed approximating to 321 billion U.S. dollars in 1996 represents only the interest portion on the debt and far exceeds the amount that were actually borrowed (although this is true of large debts in developed nations as well). Most African nations are pushing for debt relief, as they are effectively unable to maintain payments on debt without extending the debt payments indefinitely. However, most plans to forgive debt affect only the smallest nations. Large debtor nations like Nigeria are often excluded from such plans. What large sums of money that are in Africa are often used is to develop mega-projects when the need is for smaller scale projects. As an instance, Ghana was the richest country in Africa when it obtained independence. However, a few years later, it had no foreign reserves of any consequence. The money was spent on large projects that turned out to be a waste of resources. Such projects include the building of Akosombo Dam, a two-lane pave high way built into the interior, storage silos for the storage of cocoa, etc. The building the Aswan High Dam which was supposed to have modernized Egypt and Sudan is another misspent money in Africa among others.

Corruption

Corruption is also a major problem in the region, although it is certainly not universal or limited to Africa. Many native groups in Africa believe family relationships are more important than national identity, and people in authority often use nepotism and bribery for the benefit of their extended family group at the expense of their nations. To be fair, many corrupt governments often do better than authoritarian ones that replace them. Ethiopia is a good case study. Under Emperor Haile Selassie, corruption was rife and poverty rampant. However, after his overthrow, corruption was lessened, but then famine and military aggressiveness came to the fore. In any event corruption both diverts aid money and foreign investment (which is usually sent to off-shore banks outside of Africa) and put a heavy burden on native populations who are forced to pay bribes to get basic government services. In Nigeria, the same ugly trends were witnessed during the Shagari's regime as well as that of Obasanjo (all democratic regimes) and during the reign of General Babangida and General Sani Abacha (both military regimes). The amount of money carted away from Nigeria to foreign countries and into the foreign accounts of many of these government officials cannot be estimated. In the end, foreign aid may not even be helpful in the long run to many African nations. It often encourages them not to tax internal economic activities of multi-national corporations within their boarders in order to attract foreign investment. In addition, most African nations have at least some wealthy nationals, and foreign aid often allows them to avoid paying more than negligible taxes. As such, wealth distribution and capital controls are often seen as a more appropriate way for African nations to stabilize funding for their government budgets and smooth out the boom and bust cycles that can often arise in a

developing economy. However, this sort of strategy often leads to internal political dissent and capital flight culminating in the further impoverishment of the masses.

Human Resources

Widespread availability of cheap labour has often perpetuated policies that encourage inefficient agricultural and industrial practices leaving Africa further impoverished. For instance, author P.J. O'Rourke noted on his trip to Tanzania for his book, "Eat the Rich", that gravel was produced with manual labour by pounding the rocks with tools, where in almost everywhere in the world, machines did the same work far more cheaply and efficiently. He used Tanzania as an example of a nation with superb natural resources that nevertheless was among the poorest nations in the world.

Education

Education is also a major problem. Elementary education is scattershot, even in the wealthier nations. Illiteracy rates are high although a good proportion of Africans speak at least two languages and a number speak three (generally their native language, a neighbouring or trade language, and a European language). Higher education is almost unheard of, although certain universities in Egypt and South Africa have excellent reputation. However some African nations have a paucity of persons with university degrees, and advanced degrees are rare in most areas. As such, the continent, for the most part, lack scientists, engineers and even teachers. The seeming parody of aid workers attempting to teach tri-lingual people English is not entirely untrue. South Africa under apartheid is an excellent example of how an adverse situation can further degrade. Largely black population earlier wished to learn English (black South Africans saw it as a way to unite themselves as they speak several different native languages.). Still on education, its impact has many interfaces with poverty and the causes of poverty. The lack of education goes in both directions; without education, Africans are more likely to be poor and due to poverty, they are unable to have equal access to education. In many African countries, children are still required to pay to rent their own benches and desks because the schools are so poor. That does not take into account the cost of the most basic school supplies such as paper, pencils, books, chalk and small chalk boards. So, it is easy to understand why so many families are forced to choose which child or children will have access to education in their family; while the others remain at home to help either in the house or in the fields.

Poor Health/Disease Condition

Poor health and lack of affordable health education severely affects productivity. Inadequate nutrition in childhood undermines the ability of individuals to develop their full capabilities. Lack of essential minerals such as iodine and iron can impair brain development. Up to two billion

people which translate to about one-third of the total global population are affected by iodine deficiency. In Africa and other developing countries, it is estimated that 40% of children aged 4 and younger suffer from anemia because of insufficient iron in their diets. Similarly, substance abuse, including for instance alcoholism and drug abuse can consign people to various poverty cycles. Infectious diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis can perpetuate poverty by diverting health and economic resources from investment and productivity; malaria decreases GDP growth by up to 1.3% in some developing nations and AIDS decreases Africa's growth by 0.3 – 15% annually. As observed by Okafor (2009), the greatest mortality in Africa arises from preventable water-borne diseases, which affects infants and young children greater than other groups. The principal cause of these diseases is the regional water crises or lack of safe drinking water primarily stemming from admixing sewage and drinking water supplies. Much attention has been given to the prevalence of AIDS in Africa. An estimated 3,000 African die each day of AIDS and an additional 11,000 are infected. Less than one percent is actually treated. However, even with the widespread prevalence of AIDS where infection rate can approach 30% among the sexually active population, the fatal infections such as the Ebola virus, among other diseases are far more problematic. In fact, the situation with AIDS is improving in some nations as infection rates drop, and deaths from Ebola are rare. On the other hand, diseases once common but now almost unknown in most of the industrialized world, like malaria, tuberculosis, tape worm and dysentery often claim far more victims, particularly among the young. Polio has made a comeback recently due to misinformation spread by anti-American Islamic groups in Nigeria. Diseases native to Africa such as sleeping sickness, also resist attempts at elimination. All these compound the poverty condition in Africa.

Here, there is yet another very serious issue which needs to be noted; sanitation. Across Africa, there are millions of people who live without access to the most basic necessities such as potable water or toilets. It isn't very hard to understand that even with enough money to buy food; if one doesn't have access to the most basic needs such as clean water, it is virtually impossible to ever leave poverty. After all, how on earth can a mother raise healthy children with no clean water to bathe them in, to cook their food, or simply enough to give them to drink? Lack of sanitation leads to increased death rates of children. Contaminated water also increases risk of illness and death due to communicable diseases. There is a need for children to work farms and care for the family (especially if one or both parents are ill); because of poor or non-existent medical care or financial assistance to poor families by the government. Now add up these factors in addition to the lack of birth control for women and you will have the explanation for the high birth rates in Africa. After all, between the need for children to help and the chance that so many children have of dying before they reach their fifth birthday, explains the next contributing factor to poverty; population.

Over Population

Many families in Africa are large. As there is virtually no birth control for women this leads to high birth rates in Africa. They need the children to work on the farms and to help care for the family. On the other side, the negative implication of the above is that with many children born, there will be pressure and stress on the existing facilities with less opportunity for the provision of more of these facilities. As a result of this there will be rampant growth of slums and shanty towns with only few gaining access to the poorly existing infrastructures. Hence the impact of population pressure on the social life of the people cannot be over emphasized. In the midst of the above, poverty will continue to exist in Africa. In the light of the above, one could see that the causes of poverty in Africa are multifaceted and to address the problem it requires concerted efforts of all globally so that the scourge will not spread to other parts of the world especially the now developed countries. This informs shy one of the many international organizations – the G8 has identified as one of its targets, the need to address the incidence and manifestations of poverty in the third world and developing countries especially, and the African states.

The G8: History and Membership

The concept of a forum for the world's major industrialized democracies emerged following the 1973 oil crisis and subsequent global recession. In 1974 the United States created the Library Group, an informal gathering of senior financial officials from the United States, the United Kingdom, West Germany, Japan and France. In 1975, French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing invited the heads of government from West Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States to a summit in Rambouillet. The six leaders agreed to an annual meeting organized under a rotating presidency, forming the Group of Six (G6). The following year, Canada joined the group at the behest of Germany's Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and US President and the group became, the "Group of Seven (G7). The European Union is represented by the President of the European Commission and the leader of the country that holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The President of the European Commission has attended all meetings since it was first invited by the United Kingdom in 1977 and the Council President now also regularly attends.

Following 1994's G7 summit in Naples, Russian officials held separate meetings with leaders of the G7 after the group's summits. This informal arrangement was dubbed the Political 8 (P8) or, colloquially, the G7 + 1. At the invitation of United Kingdom Prime Minister Tony Blair and U.S. President Bill Clinton, Russia formally joined the group in 1997, resulting in the Group of Eight or G8.

The G8 (G08, GVIII, G.8, G-8 or Group of Eight) as it may be called therefore constitutes an international forum for eight industrialized nations also identified by their formal founding

leaders which include Silvio Berlusconi (Italy), Dmitry Medvedev (Russia), Angela Merkel (Germany), Gordon Brown (UK) Yasuo Fukuda (Japan) George Bush (US), Stephen Harper (Canada), Nicolas Sarkozy (France) and Jose Barroso (EU).

A look at the structure and activities of the G8 shows that the G8 is intended to be an informal forum and it therefore lack an administration structure like those for international organizations such as the United Nations or the World Bank. The group does not have a permanent secretariat or offices for its members. In 2008, the President of the European Union Commission participated as an equal in all summit events. Observably, the Presidency of the group rotates annually among the member countries, with each new term beginning on 1st January of the year. The country holding the presidency is responsible for planning and hosting of series of ministerial level meetings, leading up to a mid-year summit attended by the heads of government. This had been the sequence of their hosting since inception; France (1975), United States (1976), United Kingdom (1977), West Germany (1978), Japan (1979), Italy (1980), Canada (1981) France (1982), United States (1983), United Kingdom (1984), West Germany (1985), Japan (1986), Italy (1987), Canada (1988) France (1989) United States (1990), United Kingdom (1991), West Germany (1992), Japan (1993), Italy (1994), Canada (1995) France (1996) United States (1997), United Kingdom (1998), West Germany (1999), Japan (2000), Italy (2001), Canada (2002) France (2003) United States (2004), United Kingdom (2005) Russia (2006) Germany (2007) Japan (2008), Italy (2009), Canada (2010) and France (2011). The ministerial meetings bring together ministers responsible for various port folios to discuss issues of mutual or global concern. The range of topics include health, law enforcement, labour, economic and social development, energy, environment, foreign affairs, justice and interior, terrorism, tourism and trade. There are also a separate set of meetings known as the G8+5, created during the 2005 Gleneagles, Scotland summit that was attended by finance and energy ministers from all eight member countries in addition to the five "outreach countries": Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa. In June 2005, justice ministers and interior minister from the G8 countries agreed to launch an international data base on pedophiles. The G8 officials also agreed to pool data in terrorism, subject to restrictions by privacy and security laws in individual countries. An in-depth examination of the capabilities of the composition of the G8 shows that they are countries of the world that are leading powers in various dimensions and hence are capable of moving forward the whole continent if they wish. As an instance, seven of the nine leading export countries are in the G8 (Germany, US, Japan, France, Italy, UK and Canada). Also, the UK, the USA, Canada, France and Germany have nominal per capita GDP over 40,000.00 US Dollars. More so, five of the seven largest stock exchanges by market value are in G8 countries (US, Japan, UK, France, Canada). The G8 countries represent also, seven of the nine largest economies by nominal GDP (Russia is not one of the nine largest economies by nominal GDP but has the 7th largest real GDP; Canada

was the 8th in 2006 but in 2007 it lost 8th place to Spain, as it did in 2003, prompting the previous government headed by Jose Maria Aznar to request Spain's entrance in the G8). Furthermore on the capabilities of the G8 member nations, the 2nd and 3rd largest oil producers (USA and Russia) and the country with the 2nd largest reserves (Canada) are in the G8. Seven of the nine largest nuclear energy producers are in the G8 (USA, France, Japan, Russia, Germany, Canada, and UK). Finally the seven largest donors to the UN budget are in the G8 (US, Japan, Germany, UK, France, Italy and Canada) while China is the most important country in the world for addressing a wide variety of global problems; however although there have been calls for it to join, as of present it is not yet a member. In essence, a critical look at these countries that make up the G8 and their capabilities in different areas or indices that world leading nations could be adjudged, shows that the G8 is really a pack of nations that have all it takes or what it will take to move the whole world forward and to surmount all the problems that might face or are facing the whole world especially Africa and other third world and developing countries. One therefore would not be surprised that the endemic problem of poverty challenging Africa and other third world and developing nations have attracted the attention, sympathy and concern of the G8 member nations and have been included in the list of issues they are now addressing as a way of meeting the challenges of the world as a global village. This is irrespective of the fact that in the present dispensation no African country is a member or is deemed qualified, capabilities-wise to be included in the forum as Africa's representative. Only South Africa has been seen as showing the potentialities of growing up to be recognized in the forum and that has been the reason why she was among the countries recognized as one of the G8 outreach countries. Nigeria and Ghana are among the contending countries seeking and show-casing themselves to be recognized into the class of the G8 outreach countries in Africa.

Theoretical Framework

To critically examine the subject of discussion here which is the role of the G8 in making poverty a history in Africa, there is the need for us to anchor our arguments and analysis on some theoretical constructs or explanations. This will form a basis for an analysis of, and decision as to whether the G8 is really the dependable option or not in the fight against the endemic state of poverty ravaging the African continent with its concomitant or attendant problems. The need for the creation of sustainable improvements in the quality of life of all people through increases in real income per capita, improvements in education, health and general quality of life and improvements in quality of natural environmental resources cannot be over emphasized, Jhingan (2006:22ii). Besides increasing economic growth and meeting basic needs, the aim of uplifting living standards include a number of more specific goals such as bettering people's health, and education opportunities, giving everyone the chance to participate in public life, helping to ensure a clean environment, promoting intergenerational equality, among others, are the basic ways of

addressing poverty issues in the world. There have been arguments surrounding the spring-board upon which poverty eradication could be tackled in Africa. While some favour endogenously anchored base, others clamour for an exogenous or foreign aid based upon which poverty can be eliminated. That which favour endogenous or internally generated or induced economic solutions does so due to their fear of the consequences of the later. Hence they believe that foreign aid or assistance from outside would subject the continent to imperialism and dependency. To them, there is a general disillusion with aid or foreign assistance. This disillusionment lies in the fact that a great part of the aid has always been counter productive or imperialistic in relation to the actual goals of development. Observably, the tendency use to be that they do supply such aids to regimes which anxiously want to promote quantitative economic growth through some rapid industrialization, which tend to benefit the internal elite and their international allies than to carry out social reforms which will benefit the masses. It is not an exaggeration to say that aid rather than solving the poverty problems of the underdeveloped world instead exacerbates them. Apologetics to the modernization theory believes that foreign skills and technical assistance are useful and in some cases very necessary. But there are problems in securing funds and personnel and in getting them without strings which distort their investment programmes, tax policies and even basic socio-political options for development, (Offiong, 1980:13).

There are two broad competing paradigms or models of theoretical understanding that seek to explain why some people or countries are poor and others are wealthy. These are the theory of modernization and the theory of imperialism. Those who espouse the theory of modernization can be identified by their almost tenacious addition to the concept “modern” and its permutation and by categories such as “institutional differentiation”, “development”, “nation building”, “economic growth”, “advanced industrial society”, “westernized”, “backward”, “primitive”, “tribal”, “detrribalized”, and many more. On the other hand, those who employ the theory of imperialism have as their cue concepts such terms as “dependency”, “neocolonialism”, “liberation”, “exploitation”, “late capitalist societies” or “societies in the stage of monopoly capitalisms”, (Berger; 1976:11-13). What the modernization theorists most often end up with is in eventuating ethnocentric practical recipes which admonish the poor societies to imitate them all the way and they would acquire a sudden leap into the 20th century. In other words, join the Calvinistic cult and you will experience a sudden leap into modernity. To the imperialist school of thought, in a nutshell, the wealth and poverty of nations result from the global process of exploitation, a situation Andre-Gunder Frank refers to as “the development of underdevelopment”. They believe that “the problem of the poor countries is not the lack of technological know-how, cultural traits; conducive to development, or modern institutions, but that they have been subjected to the exploitation of the international capitalist system and its special imperialists agents, both domestic and alien. Hence, their belief is that the infiltration of western capital into the poor

countries has resulted in situations characterized by economists as “growth without development”, as in the particular cases of Liberia and Cote d’ Voire. The dependency theorist, which is an extension of the imperialist school of thought, believes that the crucial economic decisions are made not by the countries that are being developed but by foreigners whose interests are carefully safe-guarded. Hence, foreigners use their economic power to buy political power in the countries that they penetrate. Advocates of this thought, maintain that the collusion between alien economic and political power only end up in distorting both the economy and the policy of the dependent countries. Out of this situation emerge political alliances between the domestic and foreign bourgeoisies which apparently results in such present condition where just as the metropolis exploits the colonies, so does the domestic colonial bourgeois class exploits the rest of the population. Against this back-dropt, the modernization theorists have argued on the contrary that the present affluence of the west is not the result of their exploitation of the third world countries. They maintain that the above views held by the dependency theorists is only advanced to give the poor societies “a moral legitimacy” to demand aid or trade concessions, (sort of reparations) and “debt cancellations” from their alleged exploiters. Interestingly these modernization theorists did not disagree with the fact that the rich nations depend on the poor ones for certain raw materials but only tried not to completely take the blame by insisting that this dependence is declining; that a great decline in this dependence is expected in view of technological innovations and search for alternative resources nearer home.

The empirically accessible affects of capitalist penetration of the poor countries is based on evidence on ground. The relationship or association between these countries has resulted in high social and political costs to the poor countries. We find within each African country polarization between the relatively affluent people and those living in massive misery and extreme poverty and the tendency for the misery and poverty to increase. There is an increasing economic dependency of poor countries upon the rich ones as can be attested to by the growing debts, deteriorating terms of trade and balance of payment, and vulnerability to decisions made by governments and non-governmental bodies in the rich and powerful notions such as the G8. The ideology of development has it that benefits will eventually but assuredly extends to all sectors of the society. This is what is known as the “trickle-down effect” but more optimistically called the “spread effect”, (Offiong 1980:19). This gives the hope that the African countries does not need the G8 and other international agencies to come out of their state of poverty since their attachment to the G8 and other western agencies will only amount to imperialism. The existence of poverty and affluence is necessary for development. Therefore, this makes it necessary for capital to be accumulated for what economists like Rostow always refers to as the “take-off” stage. What we in the African countries should therefore aim at is endogenous capital accumulation since once the accumulated capital has reached a certain level, with or without the G8 and other

international development agencies; the development process will necessitate the distribution of the benefits in a more equitable way which will help in the speedy eradication of poverty in Africa. If we believe what the modernity theorists have told us, we will be perpetually tied to the west. Interestingly, what they have not been able to tell us is how soon the “spread effect” will take place; all that they have said is in “the long run”. The implication here which nearly justifies the need for us to look up to exogenously induced poverty eradication processes is that millions will continue to live and die in abject poverty while we continue to wait for “the long run”. Sequel to the above, we will find “marginals” in almost all these underdeveloped African countries. Marginals here we know, refers to those people who live on “the edge of the new zones of prosperity”. These marginals are in majority in every African society. In other words, we have a very few people who have benefited from the exploitation of the multinationals and all forms of aids while the majority languish under abject penury, (Offiong, 1980:150). As we can observe in these African countries, there is no sign of the “trickle-down-effect” or the “spread effect” manifesting itself. This situation we believe is characterized by “growth without development” – that is “growth engendered and kept up from the outside, without the construction of socio-economic structures that would enable automatic passage to a still further stage, that of a self-centered and self-maintained new dynamism” (Amin, 1970:288). There is real growth in terms of conventional economic indicators, but its concomitant problem is the co-existence of a relatively well-off and dynamic sector and a sector of stagnant and even growing misery. (Jhingan, 2006). The observable economic change is not complemented by structural changes in lines of production by employing more efficient techniques in government or economy, by meaningful involvement of indigenous labour category, or by “new social achievements and new levels of economic aspiration”, (Liebenow, 1969:174). In summary, it will be apt to state that for real development to take place in Africa which will help in eradicating poverty among the populace; it must involve a structural transformation of the economy, society, polity and culture of the country in order to allow the self-generating and self-perpetuating use and development of the people’s potentials. It must be unequivocally stated that the people of the African continent as well as other third world and developing, undeveloped and underdeveloped societies, must become involved in a frontal attack on the oppression, exploitation and poverty that they suffer at the hands of the dominant classes and their system as well as any international governmental or non-governmental institution and agencies such as the G8. Therefore to eradicate these vices such as low real income per capita, illiteracy, corruption, poverty, over population, disease, war and insecurity which all characterizes the underdeveloped and poverty ridden African society, African people and their government should not wait for or depend on such agencies or organization or forum like the G8 to propel them out of the state of poverty and penury in which they are in currently. Hence, their development should be endogenous rather than exogenously propelled.

The G8 Action Plan towards the Fight against Poverty in Africa

The G8 in its declaration stated that as a matter of strong principle, their commitment to respond to situations of humanitarian need remains universal and is independent of particular regimes. Equally they stated that their commitment to addressing the core issues of human dignity and development is unquestionable. The Development Goals set out in the United Nations Millennium Declaration are what forms an important component of their engagement. Hence, they agreed to revitalize efforts to help unlock and more effectively utilize all development resources including domestic savings, trade and investment, and official development assistance. They therefore stressed as their belief on a clear link between good governance, sound policies, and effectiveness and development success. The G8 in support of this strong international consensus announced substantial new development assistance commitment. To this end, they pledged in 2006, a total of US\$ 12 billion per year with an assurance that assuming strong African policy commitments, and given recent assistance trends they believe that in aggregate half or more of their new development assistance could be directed to African Nations that govern justly, invest in their own people and promote economic freedom. This they believe will ensure that no African country genuinely committed to poverty reduction, good governance and economic reform will be denied the chance to achieve the Millennium Development Goal through lack of finance. Hence they set out the following Action Plan in their individual and collective capacities, and through the international institutions to which they belong in cooperation and collaboration with other international institutions and civil society including the business sector, to address the following issues associated with the reduction of poverty in Africa thus;

Promoting Peace and Security

Regarding the fact that Africa has been undermined or destroyed by conflict and insecurity, and that many families have been displaced and torn apart, and the use of child soldiers has robbed many individuals of the opportunity to learn, while also sowing the seeds of long-term national disruption, instability and poverty, the G8 resolved to support African efforts to resolve the principal armed conflicts on the continent through;

- i.) Providing additional support to efforts to bring peace to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan.
- ii.) To consolidate peace in Angola and Sierra Leone.
- iii.) Assisting with programmes of disarmament, demobilization and integration at the appropriate time.
- iv.) Taking joint action to support post-conflict development in the Great Lakes' Region and Sudan.

- v.) Endorsing the proposal from the UN Secretary General and other influential partners, contact groups and similar mechanisms to work with African countries to resolve specific African conflicts.
- vi.) Providing technical and financial assistance so that by 2010, African countries and regional and sub-regional organizations will be engaged more effectively to prevent and resolve violent conflicts on the continent and undertake peace support operations in accordance with the United Nations' charter.
- vii.) Supporting efforts by African Countries and the United Nations to better regulate the activities of arms brokers and traffickers and to eliminate the flow of illicit weapons to and within Africa.
- viii.) Supporting African efforts to eliminate and remove anti-personnel mines.
- ix.) Working with African Governments, civil society and others to address the linkage between armed conflicts and the exploitation of natural resources.
- x.) Providing more effective peace-building support to societies emerging from or seeking to prevent armed conflicts.
- xi.) Working to enhance African capacities to protect and assist war-affected populations and facilitate the effective implementation in Africa of United Nations Security Council's resolutions relating to civilians, women and children in armed conflict – including by supporting African countries hosting, assisting and protecting large refugee populations.

Strengthening Institutions and Governance

Believing the fact that development is impossible in the absence of true democracy, respect for human rights, peace and good governance, they resolved as has been experienced by them, that reliable institutions of governance are a precondition for long term or large scale private investment. Hence, they set for themselves the task of strengthening institutions and governance in African states which is necessary for poverty reduction through the following:

- xii.) Supporting the NEPAD's priority political governance objectives through expanding capacity building programmes, supporting efforts towards ensuring electoral processes aimed at credible, transparent, free and fair elections for improving administrative and civil services, strengthening parliamentary oversights, promoting participatory decision making and judicial reform, among others.
- xiii.) Strengthening capacity building programmes related to economic and corporate governance in Africa focusing on the NEPAD's priority areas of implementing sound macro-economic strategies, strengthening public financial management and accountability, protecting the integrity of monetary and financial systems, strengthening accounting and auditing systems, and developing an effective corporate governance framework.

- xiv.) Supporting African peer-review arrangements through encouraging cooperation with respect to peer-review practices, modalities and experiences between the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the ECA.
- xv.) Giving increased attention to and support for African efforts to promote and protect human rights by assisting human rights activities and national regional and sub regional human rights institutions in Africa; efforts to implement human rights obligations undertaken by African governments; efforts to promote reconciliation and ensure accountability for violation of human rights and humanitarian laws including genocide, crimes against humanity and other war crimes.
- xvi.) Supporting African efforts to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- xvii.) Intensifying support for the adoption and implementation of effective measures to combat corruption, bribery and embezzlement.

Fostering Trade, Investment, Economic Growth and Sustainable Development

Acknowledging the fact that generating economic growth and mobilizing resources is imperative for poverty reduction and development, the G8 agreed on a comprehensive effort as required to stimulate economic activity in all productive sectors paying particular attention to sustainability and social costs and the role of the private sector as the engine for economic growth. In this context, the particular importance of infrastructure has been emphasized by African partners including as a domain for public-private investment partnerships and as a key component of regional integration and development. To achieve this adequate growth rates, Africa must have broader access to markets, the G8 therefore resolves to:

- xviii.) Help Africa attract investment, both within Africa and from abroad; and implement policies conducive to economic growth.
- xix.) Facilitating capacity building and the transfer of expertise for the development of infrastructure projects, with particular attention to regional initiatives.
- xx.) Providing greater market access for African products.
- xxi.) Increasing the funding and improving the quality of support for trade-related technical assistance and capacity-building in Africa.
- xxii.) Supporting African efforts to advance regional economic integration and intra-African trade.
- xxiii.) Improving the effectiveness of Official Development Assistance (ODA), and strengthening ODA commitments for enhanced-partnership countries.

Implementing Debt Relief

In this direction, the G8 resolved to:

- xxiv.) Assist African countries through the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative to reduce poverty by enabling them to exit the HIPC process with a sustainable level of debt. This they believe will reduce by 19 billion US dollars, the debt of some 22 African countries that are following sound economic policies and good governance. Combined with traditional debt relief and additional bilateral debt forgiveness, this represents a reduction of some 30 billion US dollars which is about 2/3 of their total debt burden that will allow an important shift of resources towards education, health and other social and productive uses.
- xxv.) Debt relief alone, however, no matter how generous cannot guarantee long term debt sustainability. Hence, sound policies good governance, prudent new borrowing and sound debt management by HIPCs as well as responsible financing by creditors will be necessary to ensure debt sustainability.
- xxvi.) Providing additional debt relief—so-called “topping up”—on a case-by-case basis, to countries that have suffered a fundamental change in their economic circumstances due to extraordinary external shocks. In that context, these countries must continue to demonstrate a commitment to poverty reduction, sound financial management and good governance.

Expanding Knowledge

Improving and promoting education and expanding digital opportunities is the concern here. In this direction, the G8 views investing in education, as critical to economic and social development in Africa. Also is to equip Africans with greater opportunities for personal and collective advancement. To them Education holds the key to important goals such as achieving full gender equality for women and girls. Equally, it is observable that the capacity of information and communication technology (ICT) to help Africa exploit Digital opportunities has not yet been realized. To this end the G8 resolved to:

- xxvii.) Support African countries in their efforts to improve the quality of education at all levels.
- xxviii.) Support Africa's efforts to ensure equal access to education by women and the girl-child through scholarship and breaking down all the social, cultural and other barriers that impedes these efforts.
- xxix.) Working with African partners to increase assistance to Africa's research and higher education capacity in enhanced-partnership countries.
- xxx.) Helping Africa create digital opportunities.
- xxxi.) Helping Africa make more effective use of ICT in the context of promoting sustainable economic, social and political development.

Improving Health and Confronting HIV/AIDS

It is the resolve of the G8 that persistence of disease such as malaria and tuberculosis has remained a sever obstacle to Africa's development. To this burden has been added, the

devastating personal and societal costs resulting from AIDS, the consequences of which stand to undermine all efforts to promote development in Africa. The result has been a dramatic decrease in life expectancy in Africa and a significant new burden on African health systems and economies. Substantial efforts are needed to confront the health challenges that Africa faces, including the need to enhance immunization efforts directed at polio and other preventable diseases. Therefore, recognizing that HIV/AIDS affects all aspects of Africa's future development and should therefore be a factor in all aspects of their 'support for Africa', the G8 resolved to:

- xxxii.) Help Africa combat the effects of HIV/AIDS through supporting programmes that help mothers and children infected or affected by HIV/AIDS including children orphaned by AIDS among other things.
- xxxiii.) Supporting African efforts to build sustainable health systems in order to deliver effective disease interventions.
- xxxiv.) Accelerating the elimination and mitigation in Africa of polio, river blindness and other diseases or health deficiencies by providing fair and equitable basis, sufficient resources, etc, to eliminate polio with effect from 2005.
- xxxv.) Supporting health research on diseases prevalent in Africa, with a view to narrowing the health research gap, including by expanding health research works to focus on African health issues, by making more extensive use of researchers based in Africa.

Increasing Agricultural Productivity

The G8 observes that an overwhelming majority of Africa's population is rural. To this end, agriculture is the principal economic pre-occupation for most of Africa's people. Agriculture is central not only to the quality of life of most Africans, but also to the national economy of nearly all African states. For increased agricultural production, efficiency and diversification are central to the economic growth strategies of these countries. The G8 in support of the growth and sustainable development initiatives on agriculture pledged their commitment towards:

- xxxvi.) Making support for African Agriculture a higher international priority in line with the NEPAD's framework and priorities.
- xxxvii.) Working with African countries to reduce poverty through improved sustainable productivity and competitiveness.
- xxxviii.) Supporting the development and the responsible use of tried and tested new technology, including biotechnology, in a safe manner and adapted to the African context, to increase crop production while protecting the environment through decreased usage of fragile land, water and agricultural chemicals.
- xxxix.) Working to improve food security in Africa by working with African countries to integrate food security in poverty reduction efforts and promoting a policy and institutional

environment that enables poor people to derive better livelihoods from agriculture and rural development.

- xl.) Supporting African efforts to establish food safety and quality control systems, including helping countries to develop legislations, enforcement procedures and appropriate institutional frameworks.
- xli.) Working with African countries to expand efforts to improve the quality and diversity of diets with micro-nutrients and by improving fortification technologies.

Improving Water Resource Management

In the G8 conceptualization, water is essential to life. Its importance spans a wide range of critical uses – from human drinking water to sanitation, to food security and agriculture, to economic activity, to protecting the natural environment. The G8 noted the importance of proper water resources management. It also noted that water management is sometimes at the centre of threats to regional peace and security. They also appreciated the importance of good water management for achieving sustainable economic growth and development. In the light of the above, the G8 firmly resolved to:

- xlii.) Support African efforts to improve water resource development and management.
- xliii.) Support African efforts to promote the productive and environmentally sustainable development of water resources.
- xliv.) Supporting efforts to improve sanitation and access to portable water.
- xlv.) Mobilizing technical assistance to facilitate and accelerate the preparation of portable water and sanitation projects in both rural and urban areas and to generate greater efficiency in these sectors.
- xlvi.) Supporting reforms in the water sector aimed at decentralization, cost-recovery and enhanced user participation.

The G8 Successes So Far Towards Poverty Reduction

I think it is important to reflect on what has been achieved so far in the fight against poverty in Africa by the G8. Steps taken by the G8 in her July 2005 summit at Gleneagles in Scotland and the December inter-ministerial meeting of the WTO in Hong Kong were most outstanding. This aptly shows that if there are real commitments and concerted efforts, the G8 and the WTO have the power to make poverty a history in Africa. The fact that the outcome of these meetings fell much short of what the institutions had the power to do, should not however, detract us from recognizing the importance of what has been achieved. Firstly, at Gleneagles the G8 agreed to increase their aid to developing countries by about \$50 billion a year by 2010. They agreed on an immediate and total debt cancellation for 18 of the poorest countries and on extending relief to as many as 38 other countries in the coming years, ie, 2011 and beyond. These they did as pledged.

More so, they equally agreed to ensure near universal HIV/AIDS treatment by 2010. As has been reckoned by some commentators, this measure alone will save about 10 million lives over the next five years. In addition to these headline agreements, other important commitments and pronouncements were also made in this direction and the effects of their actions on them are gradually being felt. Secondly, as a result of the Gleneagles meeting significant progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) were made. Progress was made towards the creation of a fairer trade system which gave the African countries a sustainable uplift from their deteriorated terms of trade and balance of payment thereby helping in their poverty reduction strive. Thirdly, through the G8's commitment, the African countries achieved little gains in agriculture such as an end date of 2013 for export subsidies and some concessions for special products and the use of special safeguard mechanism especially in the areas of cotton production and on the elimination of dumping. This encouraged in these developing African countries an endogenous drive towards addressing such problems as the issue of food security, poor nutrition, among others.

I disagree with those pessimists who argue that developing countries have little hope to ever strike meaningful deal within the context of the G8 or the WTO. While I share the view that the gains for the developing countries from the Gleneagles and Hong Kong meetings are yet small when compared to what is required for the timely achievement of the MDG, let us not forget that without such an achievement over 600 million people would have been left on incomes of less than \$1 a day and almost half a billion people suffering from chronic hunger. I think that from 2005 till date we have seen two important developments which have the potential to lead to drastic change towards poverty reduction in Africa. The first is that never before had public opinion in the rich countries focused on the issue of poverty to such an extent. An unprecedented number of people now demand an end to poverty and are prepared to call the authorities to account for their actions in this area. This section of public opinion has also clearly understood that poverty reduction on a significant scale requires simultaneous actions on the three fronts of debts, aid and trade. The second important development is the African developing countries' willingness to group into a number of different blocs in order to increase their negotiating power. This strategy was intensified in Hong Kong where the bloc of the G110 was formed, representing 80% of humanity. Naturally, some of the group members may have contracting interests but, if the group as a whole can rise above them and concentrate on what unites its members, the G110 can put more pressure on the rich countries so that future negotiations will truly be a development round for the poor. To this end, there is still some hope that a total disaster will further be averted as the G8 countries had announced their new food security initiative. The United States and Japan had readily committed billions for agricultural development in poor countries. They had gone ahead to pressure other G8 countries to contribute as well. Canada had equally increased and untied its food aid and hoped to further step-up its aid to agriculture. These in no small measure were crucial steps towards eradicating poverty in Africa. In sum, poverty can become history through

incessant, relentless, ever-growing, intelligent popular pressure of civil society groups, organizations and individuals in both the developed countries such as the G8 members and the developing African countries.

Failures of the G8 in the Fight against Poverty in Africa

With the emergence of the G8 and following the belief in the postulation of the advocates of the exogenous growth theory and the modernization theorists, - Wilbert Moore, W.W. Rostow, Piero Gheddo, S.N. Eisenstadt, Reinhard Bendix, Marion Levy, David Apter, just to mention but a few, hope was probable that the pitiable condition of developing countries occasioned by the on-going economic globalization would be ameliorated. Nevertheless, this condition has continued unabated. The G8 has done barely little or substantially nothing to bail Africa out of its economic woes. Thus as an instance, the aid intended for development is sometimes used for debt repayments to the international financial institutions. Worthy of mention here is the part of the US \$ 10 million in British aid funds to war-torn Sierra-Leone, which was used for the repayment of the country's debts to the IMF and the World Bank creditors, (Ahmed, 2002). Again, the G8 is in reality, nothing but an agent of neo-colonialism and has nothing to offer to developing countries and her distressed people. Hence as advocated by Joseph Shumpeter, John Hobson, V.I. Lenin, etc, the G8 as an imperialist institution, has nothing to offer to developing countries and her distressed people. This can be seen easily from its questionable globalization agenda. On another level globalization can be seen as a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon, that involves different levels, flows, tensions and conflicts, such that a trans-disciplinary social theory is necessary to capture its contours, dynamics, problems and possible future, (Ahmed, 2002). It strengthens the dominance of a world capitalist economic system, supplanting the privacy of the nation-state by multi-nations and organizations and eroding local cultures and traditions through a global culture. Capitalism therefore becomes the logic of globalization. More so, the G8 debt deal agreed by International Monetary Fund and World Bank was worth up to US \$ 1 billion per year for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC). While some countries enjoyed partial debt forgiveness, it demanded that Nigeria should make a large upfront payment of 12.4 billion US dollars. The debt deal covered Nigeria's 30 billion US dollars debt to 14 rich countries. Of these 18 billion US dollars was cancelled. This meant that Nigeria paid 40% of her total debt upfront to rich countries, (Debt update, 2005). In another direction, the G8 countries, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States of America on July 8, 2009, reached a historic agreement on goals for reducing carbon pollution. They agreed that by 2050 the developed nations would reduce carbon emission, green house gas, to no more than two degree Celsius or 3.6°F, (Kaufmann, 2009). Thus, so far the developed and developing nations have different priorities because of their differing levels of economic development. President Obama after the meeting of the G8 in L'Aquila, Italy, on climate change and global warming, however cautioned that the developed countries should take a lead in this plan while the developing ones must participate actively, (Kaufmann, 2009). On July 9, 2009, discussions on climate change expanded to include Australia, Brazil, China, Denmark, the European Union, India, Indonesia, Mexico, South Africa and South Korea who

are participating in Major Economic Forum (MEF) along with the G8 nations. The developing nations, for the first time, at the MEF acknowledged the significance of the two degree Celsius metric. They also agreed that carbon emission should be reduced to about 80% by 2050 in an international summit on climate change held in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December 2009, (Kaufmann, 2009). However, the G8 leaders failed to permit the developing nations request to endorse any target for emission cuts. In this vein, China, India and other developing countries that joined the G8 leaders were not allowed to include any targets for emission cuts. Without consent from China and India, one believes that no future discussion will lead any where, (Thomma, 2009). Essentially, the leaders of the World's Five Biggest Developing Economies (G5) joined the G8 summit in an effort to get the international financial institutions to use their multi-billion dollar government bailouts to help developing countries emerge from their poverty state occasioned by their economic crisis. While the G5 agree to a plan to continue to promote the reform of the international financial system, they lamented of under-representation and inadequate voice of developing countries in the international financial institutions, (Kaiser, 2009). This made the G8 leaders to vow to invest more in Africa's agricultural development, and make up a 25 billion dollar aid shortfall by 2010. Observably, it could be seen that it is lip service that is being paid to this just because anti-poverty campaigners' needs here is action and not words. They were not followed up strictly as pledged, (Kaier, 2009). Furthermore, the G8 leaders could not guarantee concerted action on Iran despite most nations' desires for increased sanctions on her. Again, Russia refused to re-employ sanctions against Zimbabwe following charges of election fraud, (Wolf, 2009). This situation has led to several untold problems which helped in compounding the problems of malnutrition, insecurity, internal crisis, disease, health and sanitary problems among the people thereby plunging them further into poverty. Yet, Mugabe was allowed to keep being in office, sharing power with the opposition leader after his so many years of devastating rule in Zimbabwe and the G8 did nothing to that. As a result of the Gleneagles meeting, though significant progress was made on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), yet the increase in aid and the debt package that were agreed were far below what is needed, according to estimates by the UN and the World Bank, if the MDGs are to be met. Moreover, though very little progress was made towards the creation of a fairer trade system, in particular, the wording of the final communiqué appears to suggest that the main objective of the current round of trade negotiations consists in ambitious liberalization in both the rich and poor countries. This is an altogether different yardstick from the one that is really needed. The success of the trade negotiations should be judged on the basis of their contribution to poverty reduction and development, (Paloni, 2009). As commitments in this direction had already been made in Doha, the G8 communique appears to signal a worrying attempt to renege. The trade negotiations in 2006 did not prove this impression wrong. As we know, fair trade should be an essential component of poverty reduction strategies. Unfortunately, the outcome of the WTO meeting in Hong Kong was very disappointing from the view point of the developing countries in Africa. This confirmed their concerns about the rich countries' intentions—imperialism and exploitations. Moreover, while no major decisions were taken on Non-Agricultural Market Access or on Services, the final ministerial declaration made it harder for developing countries to resist the developed countries' liberalization demands

in the negotiations that took place in 2006. In the area of Duty-Free, Quota-Free market access for the poor developing countries, the negotiations in Hong Kong were unable to produce any beneficial outcome for these poverty endemic African countries since most of their key products remained exempted.

In line with the above, the poor countries only obtained concessions for products where they are not competitive but obtained no market access for products in which they could compete. The minimum requirement for what was trumpeted as “a development round” for developing countries was surely that these countries were given access to rich countries’ markets so that they can “trade their way out of poverty”. Clearly, the Hong Kong meeting was a failed opportunity to make trade rules fairer for the developing countries and had, by contrast, represented the commercial interests of the rich countries. The 2009 DATA (Debt, AIDS, Trade, Africa) report reviewed progress against the promises made to Africa four years after the 2005 Gleneagles summit. Geldof, one of the notable poverty campaigners (behind the “Live Aid and Live 8” event) lamented to reporters in London that the Italians’ paltry contribution to the fight against poverty in Africa made it unworthy of hosting the G8 gathering. But the Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi bristled at the criticism and rejected the idea that the aid should simply continue to pour in. He went further to decry that leaders in certain African countries had funneled aid into their own SWISS Bank accounts rather than use it to help their people. He stated that Donors had to ensure African governments used the aid for schools, hospitals, roads and railroads and not to enrich political elites. He concluded with a belief on the importance of aid in improving conditions in poor countries, because it would help Europe to stem the flow of illegal immigration, which is a major issue in Italy. To this end, the G8 was tempted to set on track move to increase aid to Sub-Saharan African by 3.46 billion dollars in 2007. The G8, equally in a ploy to meet its poverty reduction targets, vowed to increase development aid by about 7.2 billion dollars in both 2009 and 2010. Despite the fact that some of the countries had met their commitments, Germany and the UK, modestly speaking, had missed some of their targets towards embarking on more generous development programmes in Africa to help eradicate poverty among the people. One major fact equally remains that as the Italian Premier noted, the African leaders siphon these aid monies into their SWISS accounts. The question is; what have the G8 leaders done to help in stopping this trend and in making sure that these aid monies are repatriated for use in the African countries? To this they have not done anything. Many years after the Gleneagles summit, the question that the G8 leaders should have asked is; “what is the real picture in Africa so far?” A just-released UN progress report on the millennium Development Goals provided would have been answer to this by describing the challenges as “staggering”. Hence, as noted by Jose Antonio Ocampo, the UN Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs, “disparities in progress, both among and within countries are vast and ... the poorest among us, mostly those in rural areas, are being left behind”. Although the global incidence of extreme poverty declined between 1990 and 2002, in Sub-Saharan Africa, another 140 million people entered that category. More still, some 44% of the region’s populations now live in extreme poverty, classed as surviving on less than one dollar a day. Observably, according to an independent audit of the G8’s performance, the world’s richest countries have

been “painfully slow” in delivering on their promises. The report by the anti-poverty watch dog, DATA (Debt, AIDS, Trade, Africa), noted that far more efforts was needed as it was clear that recent increases in effective assistance were already saving lives. What was clear therefore is that the G8 are not yet doing enough on what they promised to build on this proven success. The G8 are completely off-track on their trade promises to Africa and rates of increases are less than half of what was promised on development assistance and the fight against HIV/AIDS.

CONCLUSION

Poverty in Africa can only become history through incessant, relentless, ever-growing, intelligent popular pressure of civil society groups, organizations and individuals from within and outside the African continent. Here we have tried to examine the role of the G8 in making poverty a history in Africa. It was observed that though the G8 has helped in debt cancellation, extended to the developing nations in 2005, it was equally instrumental in the creation of those debts. Again, the G8 was equally found to be discriminatory to the developing countries and has worked closely with the IMF and World Bank which have contributed greatly to the woeful economic condition of the developing countries. In this regard, it is not odd to conclude that the G8 is an agent of neo-colonialism, imperialism, capitalist exploitation and a ploy to further deepen the African countries into dependency situations. If they genuinely mean to help in eradicating poverty in Africa, they should understand that as Cardinal Rodriguez, the Caritas International President observed in 2008, “there is now a real danger that the Millennium Development Goals will be remembered as empty words”. This can fuel the cynicism with which so many people in Africa and other developing countries already regard rich countries’ expressions of concern. World leaders had set 2015 as the target date for the achievement of the eight MDGs and the making of poverty a history in developing and undeveloped countries such as Africa. This could be seen now as an ambiguous challenge to political commitment. Now many years after the Millennium Declaration, we are less than half-way towards the target year of 2015, it is clear that too many countries will fail to achieve the goal. In some cases, at present rates of progress, they may have to wait more than a hundred years before the goals are reached. For the G8 states, the challenge of recovering momentum towards their 2010 targets is enormous. Aid can make a real difference to the lives of the poor and is an essential component in any strategy to achieve the MDGs. We celebrate the progress that is being made in so many countries such as Ghana, Liberia, South Africa, Nigeria, etc; because they have governments which are genuinely committed to poverty reduction and have shown that they can make good use of the resources that are at their disposal. G8 leaders have also discussed the issue of climate change. Climate change is being felt hardest by the poor in developing African countries – those who are least responsible for the emissions that are causing it. Humanitarian assistance is taking a larger share of donor aid. The danger is that even the inadequate resources pledged to development will be diverted to climate change. Governments should therefore be urged to ensure that assistance to African developing countries on climate change will be additional to resources for poverty reduction. The G8 leaders should therefore live up

to their promises on aids. Outside that, the individuals in these African states should endogenously strive to accumulate the resources which they need on their efforts towards making poverty a history in Africa.

The Way Forward

A range of factors has been identified as part of poverty in these African countries. They include precarious livelihoods, excluded locations, physical limitations, gender relationships, lack of security, and abuse by those in power, disempowering institutions, limited capabilities, and weak community organizations, among others. African leaders in their nature have been perpetuating these trends and they have been devastating and debilitating. Our leaders should therefore as a matter of urgency strive towards ameliorating these problems if we are to really see to the eradication of poverty in Africa. Remarkably, as an academic, I see this not only as a political conflict but also one involving competing theories and schools of thought. In this context, what I really find interesting is that there is so much that, as social scientists we still do not know about the process of development. While I think that there is almost overwhelming evidence that social development and economic growth do not occur spontaneously through the working of the market mechanism as the G8 leaders think, we need much more research to understand the process of institutional change, the role of income/wealth distribution, the relationships between the patterns of specialization, international trade and industrialization and their implications for income distribution and poverty. Also are the relationships between technological and industrial development and foreign direct investment and the role of the latter for poverty reduction, and the relationship between financial system development and economic growth. These are just a few of the crucial questions on which political scientists through their research could shed light and inform government policy makers in African countries through such forum as the NEPAD and African Peer-Review Mechanism. I think, it is fair to say that as the current mainstream has been unable to provide convincing answers to those questions, developing countries in Africa should be given more “policy space” and allowed to decide, plan and sequence their economic policies rather than being forced into adopting standardized policy packages.

Specifically, these remedial measures are recommended;

1. The developing nations should manufacture products that meet up with the demand for cost effective leadership and differentiation for the world market.
2. While we are not recommending de-linking, developing countries should learn to solve their problems themselves realizing that the solution to their problems do not lie with the G8 or such other International Institutions, agencies or bodies.
3. The G8 countries collectively need to deliver an average of an additional 7.2 billion dollars each year from this 2010 to double ODA increases to sub-Saharan Africa, leaving about half of the cumulative increase promised by 2010.
4. On improving the effectiveness of development assistance, it should be realized that improving the quality of development aid is just as important as increasing the quantity of aid. The G8 should strive to publish the operational plans for the implementation of the Accra Agenda for Action. The G8 must

support Africans' efforts to strengthen governance and fight corruption through such mechanism as the African Peer-Review Mechanism (APRM) and to continue to show strong support towards Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI).

5. On encouraging trade and investment, to make this work for Africa, this issue needs to be revisited by the G8 by giving them enhanced access to developed countries' markets, "aid for trade" to help countries produce and deliver goods, a reduction in agricultural subsidies in the rich countries that create an unfair advantage for their goods and flexibility that enables governments to develop and implement trade policies that enhance poverty alleviation strategies, all need to be offered by the G8.
6. In the area of assisting in critical sectors, the G8 must find creative global solutions for challenges of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people. The G8 leaders should lead multilateral efforts to invest in critical sectors that could best help African economies grow such as agricultural development, health, climate change and education.

The challenge now is clear. To get back on track, the G8 must aggressively pick up the pace and offer not less than a 4 billion dollar increase in development assistance to Africa each year. They must also demonstrate a far greater sense of ambition, urgency and focus on Africa in the world trade talks.

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