



RE-THINKING POVERTY AND HEALTH ISSUES IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

Eliminating local and global poverty is a presenting challenge and a task that must be accomplished in setting out for the achievement of sustainable development per the 17 Goals of the UN, with adequate health provisions and sustainable environment. As people tend to live longer, there are dwindling and limited resources for the world's growing population, with tendency towards abject poverty among vulnerable populations. The economies of the tropical and sub-tropical regions of Africa, Asia and Latin America have consequentially been made to run the gauntlet in the exacerbated poverty, declining health and environmental prospects in the COVID-19 pandemic era.

Keywords: human suffering, degradation, moral duty, conflict, poverty eradication, coronavirus

INTRODUCTION

The issue is that a salient number of the world's citizens is living in absolute poverty with concomitant human suffering, diminished resources, population pressure, environmental deterioration, and disease, which are being exacerbated by the ravaging pandemic of SARS-COV-2 or COVID-19 (Chukwuma 2020a-c). There are extant opportunities for influential allocation and mobilisation of resources through local and global commitment for tangible progress in poverty alleviation/eradication.

Challenges, issues and opportunities

The World Health Organization, WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic, precipitating lockdowns in disparate economies which precipitated a worldwide spontaneity resulting in a disastrous single-day drop for the Dow Jones Industrial Average and a spiralling poverty irrespective of any relief or stimulus designed to ameliorate the debilitating effects and help the world's inhabitants and businesses. There is no phrase that can aptly characterize the Year 2020 than the World War uncertainty of the never-ending COVID-19 pandemic. The novel coronavirus, SARS-COV-2 or COVID-19 pandemic has configured and exposed the local and global resilience, conscience, the reaching out of humanity, diverse cultures, geopolitics, ecosphere (Chukwuma 2020b), justice and resultant exacerbated hunger (Chukwuma 1996; Chukwuma 2020c) and poverty (UN 2020; UNESCO 2020) which ravaged and diminished the delivery of care, global health and food security. Despite the ostensible newfangled research modalities permeated by armchair researchers due to inter alia superimposed lockdowns as the world joined forces and collaborated to stem the intransigent and unconscionable conduct of COVID-19,

poverty reared its never-ending medusa-like head to expose/unravel the unpreparedness of the erstwhile models of the private and public sectors to alleviate and eradicate the tendencies and forces of poverty. The COVID-19 pandemic incessantly depicts a disproportionate economic impact on disparate regions, with special predilection towards the tropics and subtropics of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, as they have unquestionably been made to run the gauntlet.

There is a need to provide formidable trajectories to curb increasing poverty which have resulted from natural and anthropogenic factors locally and globally. It is imperative to envisage a World Order devoid of abject poverty. The main goal will be to have a representative local and global civilization of peace and adequate provision that has obliterated penury in all its ramifications within extant challenges and constraints. The current COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated how the world is inextricably-linked in communication and information dissemination to create a healthy future (Chukwuma 2020a), ecologically collaborative measure (Chukwuma 2020b), and urgent objectives to combat hunger (Chukwuma 1996; Chukwuma 2020c). These have tended to create newfangled ways and expansive ideologies to harness local and global partnerships to retard untoward events. Irrespective of the disparate contradictions, despondencies, distractions, encumbrances, internal and extraneous efforts associated with domestic and global poverty, it becomes pertinent to develop and implement a morphologically ambitious long-run programme and target for the unique culture and region in our pluralistic society for the alleviation and subsequent eradication of poverty. The poverty dissipation structure and function must inculcate the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and consensus-building initiatives (UN 2020) as well as other presenting challenges, issues and opportunities. These must be relevant to the local and global milieu for the present and the future to induce and drive the optimum perspectives of society and humanity in a peaceful and conducive ambient for poverty alleviation/eradication. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted deleteriously on the socioeconomic and developmental context of vulnerable populations due to inter alia lockdowns being reinforced to curb the dissemination of the indicted coronavirus .

DISCUSSION

In 2014, sub-Saharan Africa contained the highest rate of global inhabitants below poverty level of 55 percent as recorded by the Economic Commission for Africa, ECA (UNESCO 2020). The initial virtual presentation by the Management of Social Transformation, MOST of UNESCO in association with Gabon, and in cooperatively with the Economic Community for Central African economies on "Poverty in Central Africa: Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Strategies" was targeted to achieve strengthened synergies in Central African economies undergirded by public policies and social science research to curb the increasing poverty enigma augmented by the pandemic of COVID-19 and its emerging variants (Chukwuma 2018) as contextually stipulated in the Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030 and the African Union Agenda 2063 (UNESCO 2020).

It is perspicuously observed that COVID-19 has has remarkably elevated the poverty level and induced inequalities and inequitable distribution of resources, dissipated earnings or income due to extreme and unmitigated social exclusion. As a result of the superimposed lockdowns and social distancing with the concomitant recession in Nigeria, inordinate numbers of breadwinners and sole private entrepreneurs have precipitated to the abyss of penury and economic deprivation [personal observation]. These intricately complex conditions are presentiments of dire

consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic if the UN Framework for the immediate socioeconomic response to COVID-19 is not adhered to. The focus must be on vulnerable populations, the youth and elderly.

Poverty decrement may not be sustained, and could revert to non-optimization of income and unsustainable anthropogenic activities resulting from susceptibility to the new variant or erstwhile and extant novel coronavirus. Also, decreased and decompensate economic margins, diminutive resilience to unforeseen and unpredictable repercussions, untoward speculations of economic activities, disruptions and restrictions on industrial and socioeconomic attributes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic must be reverted in full scale terms. It is imperative that global value chains are compensated on regional and domestic supply chains to create or enhance social welfare schemes which can restore and nurture the work rather than the leisure ethic for sustainable development. These will make provisions for supportive labour markets, subsistence and industrial farming.

The COVID-19 propagated derangement of economic productivity, industrialization and other sustainable anthropogenic activities have immeasurably continued to negatively impact on socioeconomic development and enhancement. As in Nigeria where recession has inexplicably overwhelmed the manufacturing, productivity and social ambient, it has caused the supply, demand and consumption of finished goods not to assume collinearity in the arrangement, development and activation of a disrupted industrial process in the present and proximal future of the domestic and international sphere. It is pertinent to obliterate or obviate further excoriation of the deleterious effects of the COVID-19 pandemic to manage the impacts of furlough and lay off (Isaksson 2020), as applicable, which have disrupted the pecuniary features of workers and their families. These are achievable by creating and strengthening social and welfare systems for meaningful wellbeing and revered occupational status.

The utmost agendum is to entirely harness or curb the COVID-19 crisis and emergence of its variant in order to abate further morphological alterations in Society as not to culminate in prolonged or permanent derangement of manufacturing, productivity and social development (Igoe 2020) beyond restoration and sustainability. Both the private and public sectors of employment and production must come to terms in an egalitarian spectrum to mitigate or ameliorate the trauma of poverty on its trajectory to complete alleviation or eradication of the scourge of poverty in all ramifications in contextual millieux.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has undeniably exposed the non-pragmatic realities of governmental and institutional preparedness of poverty alleviation/eradication policies and strategies regarding health and the environment. Thus, input of veritable modalities are required for poverty to be latent and in diminutive capacity. In addition to retarded initiative and progress to combat poverty in several economies, it is not laudable to speculate, predict and project that the COVID-19 pandemic will summarily precipitate to expansive inequitable disruption of resources, widespread economic inequality induced by the disruption and dissipation of small- and medium-sized enterprises, long-term unemployment impacts, and human capital incapacitation incorporated and sustained by vulnerable households, internecine and international conflicts as well as global climate change.

These have been exacerbated due to prior inadequate inclusive economic growth and capacity, restricted aggregation of earned and accumulated productive resources and assets, elevated susceptibility and non-protectivity to risks and risk factors. The COVID-19 pandemic has tremendously altered the lifestyle and choices of the population. Thus, the complex interplay of restoration and sustainability with effective and efficient responses to the precipitated global socioeconomic upheavals cavorting with poverty must be addressed. Procrastination will present dire and unprecedented uninhibited repercussions at the local and global levels, if no steps are taken to rescue the citizens and enterprises from total annihilation due to extreme poverty due to inter alia the COVID-19 pandemic or its nascent variants or mutants as they impact on health and the environment.

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