

## Poverty Traps and Impending Security Challenges: An African Perspective

<sup>1</sup>Austine Okere, <sup>2</sup>Chuka Enuka

*Department of History and International Studies Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria*

*\*Corresponding Author: Chuka Enuka, Department of History and International Studies Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria*

### ABSTRACT

*Recognizing the enormous challenges facing the global community to eradicate poverty, the international development community in 2000 adopted specific targets for poverty reduction, now known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The overarching goal was to halve income poverty worldwide by 2015. Despite the commitments contained in the MDGs, poverty and hunger is on the increase, and disparity between the rich and the poor, between and within nations widening. With the number of poor persons on the rise in Africa, a favourable condition conflicts is created. This is unarguably a security challenge. This paper posits that the challenge of poverty and its accompanying challenge further entraps Africa and deepens the continent and the lives of its people in the vortex of security crisis.. Adopting the quantitative and qualitative method of historical analysis, the paper recommends that improved commitment to poverty reduction, peace and security is imperative.*

**Keywords:** *Africa, Conflict, Poverty Traps, Security Challenges*

### INTRODUCTION

Despite evidence from the MDGs Assessment that poverty declined in a number of African countries, policy analyst believe that such statistics do not exonerate Africans and their leaders in their quest to tackle poverty. They contend that Africa still remains the most poverty stricken continent in the world. Furthermore the presence of structural imbalances in African economies makes it difficult to compare statistics on improve poverty figures. To compound this precarious situation data from the World Bank (as at 2012) still notes that Africa is the world's poorest continent, with nearly half of its over 42.7 percent of its population subsisting on less than 2 US\$ a day (World Bank, 2015).

Recent evidence shows that African economy is improving in GDP terms (mostly in sub-Saharan Africa,) but still her population is bedeviled with challenges of healthcare, nutrition, proper hygiene and basic amenities. Some scholars hold such view that Africa's economic growth in years cannot match the demands of her teeming population and would take a while to impact directly on it. Such positions identify

flaws like dysfunctional economic policies (Bates, 1981), challenges of currency, institution and leadership (Collier and Gunning, 1999) and geography (Sachs, 2003) which should be put into consideration when attempting to explain Africa's economic trends.

In considering population, Africa has a population close to 1 billion which is predicted to more than double in 40 years to 2.3 billion. Furthermore, Africa one of the poorest continent in the world also has the highest birthrate. A woman in sub-Saharan Africa will give birth to an average of 5.2 children in her life time (Smith, 2011). In spite of Africa's population size, it is believed that its vast natural resources could meet the demands of this increase. But the control of this same resources remains in the hands of few high income earners or political class. Such contentions posit Africa's size and natural resources exceeds the combined territories of Europe, the United States and China, yet most Africans must struggle for bare survival of in the mist of these natural resources (Seidman et al, 2006). As such, 'population darwinism' appears to be an order which characterizes Africa societies allowing for prolonged conflicts in a bid to demand for

survival and social justice. African thus could be likened to a society where individuals attempt to survive at all cost.

Conditions such as perpetual poverty traps, failing economic policies, rapid population growth contending for vast resources controlled by the minority therefore make African countries a volatile mix of insecurity and conflict. Theoretical framework like the human needs theory championed by Burton (1997) and frustration-aggression gives credence to this. Furthermore, Adedeji admits that competition for economic resources is an important factor of conflict and insecurity, but it is not the only one. He fecundates this thus: “Competition for resources typically lies at the heart of conflicts; this accounts for the intensity of struggle for political power in many African countries” (Adedeji, 1999). Thus it is right to argue that no continent that is bedeviled with problems of peace and stability in its milieu can survive. The frequency of territorial disputes, civil wars, violence, armed conflict and collapsed governments which remain fundamental characteristics of African countries could be hinged on this. Sundberg (1999) premised the continued sustenance of conflict in the Republic of Congo (Congo –Brazzaville) on poverty trap during the ethnic war of 1993-94. She opines the political class sought to control resources which determined people’s loyalty and only exploited ethnic divides later.

To further add to this mix is the magnitude of corruption in African countries which also has poverty ramifications and effects. By looting the commonwealth of the people using different political programmes as conduit-pipes, African societies appear to sit on a ticking time-bomb which might go off soon. Political unrest of the Arab Springs reflects the possibility of this. Gurr and Marshall (2003) argues that most African conflicts are caused by a combination of poverty and weak states and institutions, and these have had a devastating impact on Africa’s development. This study highlights such dangers of existing poverty traps in African societies and how such could lead to renewed waves of conflicts. By denial of basic needs (which could lead to poverty) and failure to address these poverty challenges timely and adequately, most African countries might soon be at the heart of conflicts and human right challenges. Adopting a qualitative and quantitative methodology, this papers shows that if poverty issues are not addressed as the world has entered the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs) phase, further conflicts and escalation of existing conflicts might perpetually trap the African continent.

### IDENTIFYING POVERTY TRAPS

In 1995, the World Social Summit held in Copenhagen identified poverty as a major threat to the future of humankind. Contentious claims have made it clear that poverty is a phenomenon both in developed and developing countries alike, but it’s presence in developing countries has been more alarming. Poverty as traditionally defined using household income or consumption data is a function of both the level of mean income or consumption in a population. Hence, both growth (a change in the mean) and changes in inequality can lead to changes in poverty (Wodon, 2007). Poverty trend in developing countries is multi-faceted; in most cases, this trend is seen to be synonymous and responsible for increased population, inability to eradicate diseases and other endemics effectively. This also goes with deplorable living conditions and literacy. More often than not, trends like these are fundamental characteristics of developing countries. Many years ago, societies in developed countries were as poor as their counterparts in developing countries today, but they have managed over the years to these debilitating effects of poverty (Landes, 1998). For instance the U.S. in 1776 was at the same level as Africa today. Same could be said of Australia, Japan, Western Europe and some Latin American Countries which have escaped poverty traps.

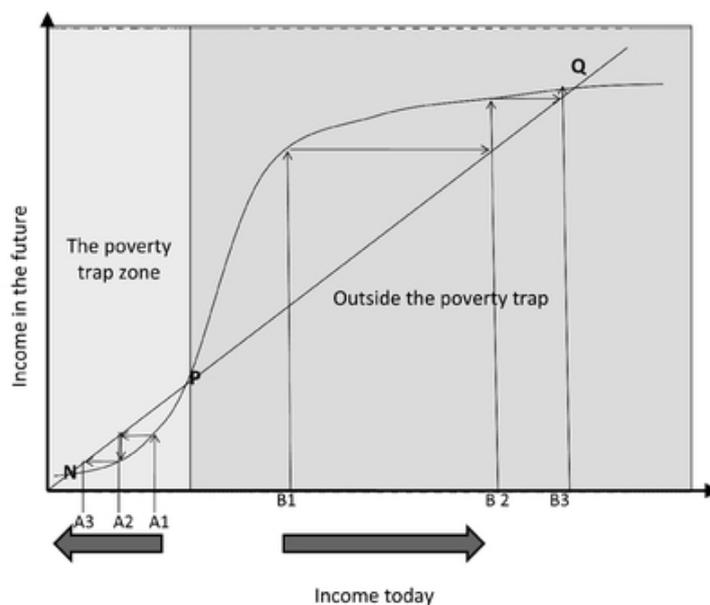
No doubt, poverty traps exists all around the world. Evidently, researches have been conducted to understand reasons behind the cycle of poverty around the world. Such researches identify lack of savings, absence of trade, technological reversal, natural resource decline, adverse productivity shock and population growth as some of the pre-conditions for poverty trap both at household and government levels (Sachs, 2005). Other reasons identified as potential conditions for poverty are population growth, deplorable environmental conditions and conflicts which could add to hunger and under-nutrition. Situations which favour this make it impossible for people to reach their full economic potentials and could lead to frustration, anxiety and violence.

Measuring the extent of poverty in most household depends on their today’s income put against expenditure on one hand and tomorrow’s income on the other hand (Figure

1), the general measurement is pegged at 1 US dollar a day (depending on purchasing power parity -PPP); although some analysis have pegged this at 1.25 USD a day. In simple terms what your income is today influences what your income would be in the future. What an average household has today (in terms of money) would determine how much they would eat (nutrition), how much would be committed to education, healthcare, savings and investment (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011). This is what is called the 'Capacity Curve' which capsulate poverty traps all over the world.

This exciting analysis has been employed to explain how and why Africa countries remain in poverty traps and has also guided the proffering

of different ideologies for solution to this. One of such is the call for a 'Big Push' to assist African countries escape this poverty trap which has bedeviled them for decades. How to go about this push remains a problem. Different debates on which ideology should guide African economies out of poverty traps have been proffered by economists, development specialist as well as international organizations. Such debates have been guided by numerous randomized experiments conducted over time. Of all these debates, perhaps the Sachs versus Easterly appears to be the most popular. These renowned development economists differ on the best approach which developing countries could escape poverty traps.



Source: Banerjee & Duflo, 2011

Figure 1. An 'S' Shaped Capacity Curve showing Poverty Traps at 'N'

On one hand, Jeffery Sachs, adviser to the United Nations and director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, in New York City, believes poor countries are poor because they are hot, infertile, malaria infested, often landlocked. This makes it hard for them to be productive without initial large investment to help them deal with these endemic problems. But they cannot pay for these investments precisely because they are poor. This is why foreign aid is key (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011). In his book, *The End of Poverty*, Sachs argues that if rich countries of the world could commit \$195 billion in foreign aid per year between 2005 and 2025, poverty could be eliminated from developing countries (mostly Africa, which contributes significantly to the number of poor people in the world). On the other hand,

William Easterly and Zambian development economist Dambisa Moyo have condemned solutions like the ones proffered by Sachs. Both have argued in their books (*The Elusive Quest for Growth* and *The White Man's Burden* by Easterly; and *Dead Aid* by Moyo) that aid does more harm than good for economies of developing countries. They advance arguments for these countries to search for their own solutions, while noting how corrupting and undermining local institutions and creating a self-perpetuating lobby of aid agencies remain fundamental features in developing countries. In Africa, despite these arguments, what appears to be striking is what amount constitutes actually money for aid.

Evidence suggests aid is only a small percent of money spent on the poor. In 2003 alone, aid to

Africa constituted only a 5.7 percent of total government budget in 2003 (such figure would be lesser if we exclude South Africa and Nigeria

as these countries depends little on foreign aids (Moss, 2006).

**Table1.** *Saving Rates in Developing Countries*

By Income Level in 2002,	in % of GDP
Upper-Middle-Income Countries	25%
Lower-Middle-Income Countries	28%
Low-Income Countries	19%
Least-Developed Countries	10%

*Source: World Bank (2004)*

**POVERTY TRAPS IN AFRICA PORTENDING ‘SOCIETAL GRIEVANCES’**

From the above purview, arguments thus arise as to reasons why African countries have not been able to escape from its own poverty traps. Such arguments have indicated that many countries around the world have escaped such traps over the years; African poverty figures have continued to attract the interest economist and policy makers alike. Using nutrition indicators, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) indicates of the 925 million hungry people worldwide, over 239 million of them are in Africa (mostly sub-Saharan), with Asia and Pacific accounting for 579 million people (FAO 2010). It is worthy to note that figures in Asia and Pacific countries are understandable when population in these areas is compared with those in Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa actually had the largest proportion of its population undernourished an estimated 30 percent in 2010, compared to 16 percent in Asia and Pacific (FAO 2010).

Farming in Africa (mostly subsistence) has seen decline in some years. This trend has been partly due to changes in climate leading to flooding and prolong drought in some areas. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicted that climate change could affect potential crop yields from rain-fed agriculture to decline by 50 percent in some African countries, thereby causing more families to go hungry. African families, mostly rural areas with income tied to agriculture are currently grappling with the effects of little/low agriculture yield making it difficult for them to survive each day. Despite Africa’s abundant natural resources in agriculture, her population lacks basic staple food as such few take to farming. For instance, The Guinea Savanna region –an area twice as large as that planted with wheat worldwide covering an estimated 600 million hectares – only 10 percent of the area is currently under cultivation (FAO, 2009).

This disturbing pattern has increased general food prices in Africa (mostly staple). In the horn of Africa, food prices are near the highest level seen since 2010 making it difficult for more than 12million people to survive. This contributes significantly to malnutrition and humanitarian concerns in this already crises ridden areas. According to the World Bank’s Food Price Watch Report (2009), more than 40 percent of children under five within the horn of Africa are suffering from acute malnutrition. Food prices in some African countries have doubled in years. Countries like Uganda, Somalia, Rwanda and Congo DRC have recorded high prices for corn. Understanding the precarious situation, the former World Bank President, Robert Zoëlick warns, “Persistently high food prices and low food stocks indicate that we are still in a danger zone.” Also, the problem of food storage has escalated huger across most African countries. Specifically, challenges associated with the inability of many African countries to properly store harvest (mostly in years of surplus) and the absence of proper agricultural processing centers has further compounded the precarious food situation in Africa.

In light of these, premising persistent conflicts and security challenges in Africa on raising food prices is plausible; this could be seen alongside galloping inflation which has characterize African economies. Also this portends similar threat to neighbouring countries in the form of humanitarian challenges and significant pressure placed on limited food sources already available. Since most rural families depend on agricultural income, low yield and increase food prices would affect their purchasing power. Because these families need to feed, they tend to spend a significant part of their meager income on purchasing food at higher prices. Such situation makes it difficult for them to meet other basic needs like healthcare and education. Frustration and anxiety could thus become peculiar characteristics of families in Africa. Consequently using premises from the

frustration-aggression theoretical frame work (See Berkowitz, 1941 Millier et al, 1941 Friedman and Schustack, 1999), increased conflicts and security challenges in Africa can be premised poverty induced traps.

This paper's concern from the above analogy is that increasing poverty figures in Africa could act as foundations for increased security challenges and carnage. This position using the Human Needs theory could explain in reverse the impending security challenges bedeviling African societies. Research has shown that conflicts and insecurity could lead to poverty. Specifically, this could happen when conflict impacts directly on polities, economies and societies (see Collier, 2000). Examining this purview on the flip-side, conflicts in Africa have been fought on economic terms. In the past, the need to control the economic sub-structure has been identified in conflicts for countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone, Congo and Angola. Such traditional arguments on economic factors which could lead to conflicts only examined the general terms -like state and rebel control for economic resources. Contemporary analysis into poverty as a plausible cause to conflicts, examined this under individual levels. This type of thinking was made popular by Paul Collier, who identified 'individual grievance' indicator as a pre-conditions for conflicts mostly starting from protest. For Collier, the reason why analysts have tended to focus on protest-type variables is because of the loud discourse of grievance generated by the rebel groups. This is in spite of the evidence that in most cases rebellion seems to be the rage of the poor (Collier, 2000).

Africa is one of the fastest growing regions in the world, with promising projections to come in the next five years. The need to address these growing poverty traps with specific policies cannot be over emphasized. As population figures and poverty rate soars, it would become difficult for countries to address resultant effects this poverty traps. One of such challenges would be the impending security challenge.

### AFRICA'S SECURITY CHALLENGES AMIDST POVERTY TRAPS

African political, social and economic foundations could be rocked by the contemporary trends of security challenges. More so, such challenges could start as simple protest by the poor agitating for better living conditions and improvement in living standards. The proponents of economic theory contend that

the propensity to indulge in violent conflict is higher for low income countries or less educated people (Ehrlick, 1996). In Africa, protests have been organized at different levels citing economic challenges faced by the poor. To understand this, emphasis has to be made on the Africa's growing population. The argument that African poverty has much to do with population is pertinent. For example the Report of the Commission of Africa (RCA) reports that between 1980 and 2002 in sub-Saharan Africa, population grew from 383 to 689 million, suggesting an increase of 80% (Ikejiaku, 2009); while growth rate decline from 575 million USD in 1980 to 524 million USD in 2005 (Schaefer, 2005). Apart from this economic decline, Africa's population is a young one (the youngest of all continents); about 44 per cent of Africa's population is under 15 years old. This figure compared with Asia (South Asia 34% and East Asia 28%) (Ikejiaku, 2009) should serve to benefit to African economy and therefore an assets. However, failure to achieve this has been hinged on the exploitation of her resources by the political class using grandiose plans for looting the nation's commonwealth and pauperizing the lower class. By not been able to create sustainable jobs which will enable them attempt to escape poverty traps, her teeming population -mostly youths -might soon become hubs for social unrest and insecurity.

History is filled with specific instances of this: the French, American and Bolshevik revolutions are some examples. In support of this argument Marke (2007) points that when youths are not engaged in meaningful work and are lacking basic necessities; they bring attention to their plight by engaging in destructive behavior. Contemporary evidence of this is the Niger-Delta region in Nigeria and the waves of protest of the Arab Spring led by frustrated youths.

Apart from Africa's growing young population, certain conditions appear to welcome current security challenges in her poverty traps. One of such conditions which until recently have not received attention is the level of arms trade in Africa. The movement of small and light arms in Africa has become a source of worry. Not all African country possesses the technical ability and necessary man power to produce light weapons. This makes Africa a veritable market for arms from almost all part of the world. According to Wood and Peleman, (2000) among Africa's major supplier of light arms and other weapons are China, Israel and more than 20

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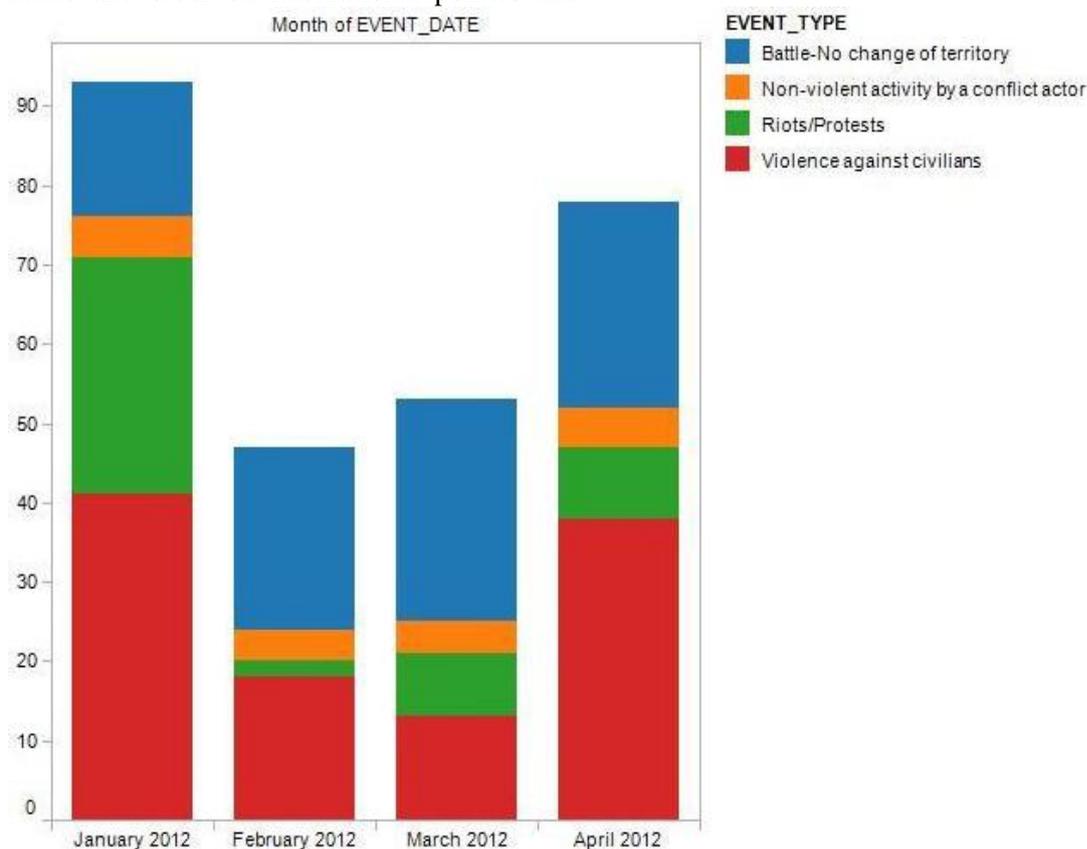
OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) members. Specifically, the Chinese AK-47 assault rifles are common in national armies as well as among armed rebels groups such as those in eastern Congo (Eneka, 2011).

In past and current conflict ridden areas in Africa, China's arms sales stood at 1.3 billion USD in 2003 (Alden, 2007). To support this, a report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute posits that although USA is still the leading exporter of arms, China is currently challenging this position with lucrative deals in Asia, the Middle East and Africa (Deutsche Welle, 2017). Small arms are lightweight and durable thus making them concealable in numerous ways. Most often than not, light arms are transported in Africa by air or sea. Sometimes, traffickers also smuggle small arms along rivers and coast in Africa. Researchers from the Small Arms Survey claim that Malian arms smugglers pack small arms into waterproof sacks attach them to boats and run them up the Niger River (Schroeder and Lamb, 2012).

Eneka (2011) argues that the purchase and sale of arms cannot be condemnable considering the nature and order on international politics and

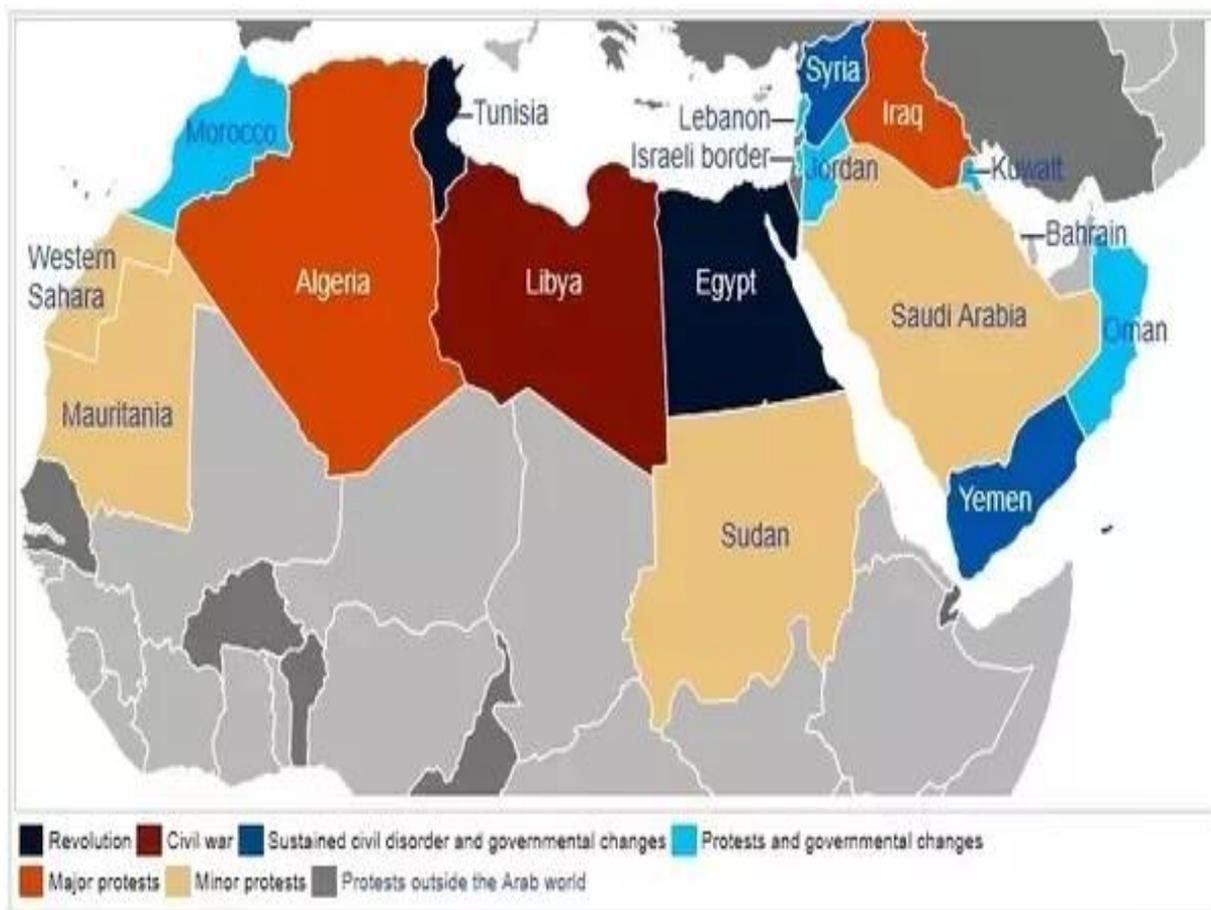
practice. But a point worthy of note is with the level of despair, frustration, anger and anxiety in poverty stricken societies in Africa combine with the inflow of small and light arms, Africa would soon be faced with new waves of security challenges. Such challenges could be in form of protest, armed insurrection against government (class against class –political versus middle and low income) or civil strife. Historical it has been identified that the presence of arms and weaponry could intensify wars and conflicts, but also its presence can also generate new ones.

Most policymakers in Africa before the Arab Spring had not fully appreciated what role poverty traps could play in the spurring social unrest and security challenges. With the price of food and other basic amenities rising persistently, this could push poor people to rise against their own government. Examples of this includes the bread riots in Egypt, food riots in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Senegal, Cameroon and Mozambique in 2008 and the Nigeria fuel subsidy protests in 2012; these 'Occupy Movements' should be seen as reflections of the pulse of the people who are tired of been in poverty traps which characterizes African societies.



Source: Armed Conflicts Events and Location Dataset (2012)

Figure 2. Violent Events by Type in Nigeria (Between Jan. and April, 2012)



Source: [Quora.com](http://Quora.com)

Figure 3. Map showing Countries affected by the “Arab Spring”

### ESCAPING POVERTY TRAPS: USING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

Peace and security are prerequisite to poverty reduction, but poverty could also threaten the security of African countries. Thus no meaningful development strategy would be complete without ensuring the poor escapes poverty traps. Scholars have contended that the lack of, and failures in development can be seen as contributing to instability and the eruption of conflict in most parts of the world. Experience demonstrates that poverty, hopelessness, inequity and marginalization are often among the root causes of devastating conflict. In crisis situations, and in societies emerging from conflict, human rights are often violated. This popular argument can be explained in the general context of wars and conflict which have already erupted. Since 2000, new patterns of thinking relating poverty and human rights have emerged thus engaging academics and researchers alike. Their argument is based on global wealth inequalities and the rhetorical response to bridging this gap between rich and

poor. A study estimates that in 2000 the bottom 50 per cent of the world’s adult together had 1.1 per cent of global wealth while the top 10 per cent had 85.1 per cent and the top 1 per cent had 39.9 per cent. (Davies et al, 2006) The researchers contended that in response to this disparity, developed countries (with this higher income) only increased minimally development assistance. This 0.33 per cent Gross National Income (GNI) increase is seen to be inadequate to the 0.7 per cent target promised over 30 years ago. Confronted with these facts, it is believed rich countries may concede to do more to help the poor. Under this thinking, obligation to reduce this divide is seen with clarity rather than the purview of moral obligation.

It is under this premise that the new set of global development goals (the SDGs) which took over from the MDGs in September, 2015 has been set to include targets and indicators covering areas of good governance and human rights. This does not go say that the MDGs since 2000 did not sufficiently cover human rights and good governance, but unfortunately since implementation the emphasis (mostly in low income countries) has shifted way from these.

## Poverty Traps and Impending Security Challenges: An African Perspective

On one hand, writing on the relationship between the MDGs and Human Rights, the End Poverty Campaign and the United Nations Human Rights Commission contended in a report titled “The Millennium Development Goals and Human Rights” (2013) that all the goals of the MDGs directly captures Universal Human Rights conventions and agreement which have been signed across the world; Among these include: International Covenant on

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD); Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Fig. 3 shows evidence of this.

GOAL 1	<b>Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger</b>		
	<b>Target 1.A:</b> Halve the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day (between 1990 and 2015).	<i>Right to adequate standard of living Right to Social Security</i>	UDHR, articles 22 and 25 ICESCR, articles 6, 9 and 11
	<b>Target 1.B:</b> Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people.	<i>Right to Work</i>	ICESCR, article 6
	<b>Target 1.C:</b> Halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger (1990-2015).	<i>Right to food</i>	UDHR, article 25(1) ICESCR article 11
GOAL 2	<b>Achieve universal primary education</b>		
	<b>Target 2.A:</b> Ensure that, by 2015, all children will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.	<i>Right to education</i>	UDHR article 25(1), ICESCR articles 13 & 14, CRC article 28(1)(a), CEDAW article 10, ICERD article 5(e)
GOAL 3	<b>Promote gender equality and empower women</b>		
	<b>Target 3.A:</b> Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.	<i>Women's rights to equality</i>	UDHR article 25(1), ICESCR articles 13 & 14, CRC article 28(1)(a), CEDAW article 10, ICERD article 5(e)

*Source: End Poverty Campaign and UNHRC (2013)*

**Figure 3.** Some MDGs and how they relate Directly to Human Rights

On the other hand, despite the inherent flaws in the MDGs implementation at Human rights level, scholars have accepted that the MDGs still represent a global compact and means to mobilize all countries into this general development agreement.

In 2014, during a process to introduce the new set of development goals, the Inter-governmental Open Working Group –OWG, understood the challenge on human rights and good governance as they related to poverty traps and other inhibitor to human development across the world. Consequently, the OWG conducted adopted well-rounded discussion and solutions to carter for Human Rights and Good Governance in the next set of development goals. Former Mauritius President, Ms. Robinson posited that in the creation of the SDGs and in a bid to avoid poverty and security traps which could cause further challenges, focus should be on the “drivers of peace that impacts on sustainable development.”

Consequently, she outlined areas like creating responsible, transparent, and inclusive governance; promoting dialogue; guaranteeing citizen’s rights to access public information; inclusive economic governance, growth and development and conflict resolution; transformation and peacebuilding.(UN, 2014). The general suggestions and resolutions from this meeting formed vital aspects of the development of the SDGs. Overall, it was resolved that:

- The concept of peace as a precondition for development, and how to address these issues in a sustainable development agenda (i.e., as goals, indicators, and/or enablers);
- The importance of addressing the root causes of poverty as a contributor to conflict and violence, as well as the structural drivers of development and growth;

- How to encapsulate issues of conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and rule of law within a universal agenda;
- Given the broad nature of these issues, how to identify indicators and means of measurement;
- Acknowledging the role of the small arms trade in driving conflict and preventing development;
- Accounting for the international dimensions of conflict and the rule of law, the role of international institutions, the importance of State sovereignty, and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities;
- Promoting rule of law building on the 2012 Declaration of the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Rule of Law at National and International Levels, and in a manner that respects national circumstances; and
- The importance of strengthening institutions, especially for fragile States, addressing corruption, and ensuring social inclusion and access to justice for all. (UN, 2014)

Today, to avoid poverty and security traps, the areas which the SDGs covers (as it related to Human Rights) include attempts to get National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI) to build capacity of policy implementation to be at par with the global desires and agreements of Human rights. Secondly, development goals related to economic, social and cultural rights with country-specific differences. For instance, for the SDGs, Goals 1(poverty), 2 (food and nutrition), 3 (health), 4 (education) and 6 (water and sanitation) are to work in tandem with the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. As such, promoting these has fallen directly within the purview on NHRIs at country level.

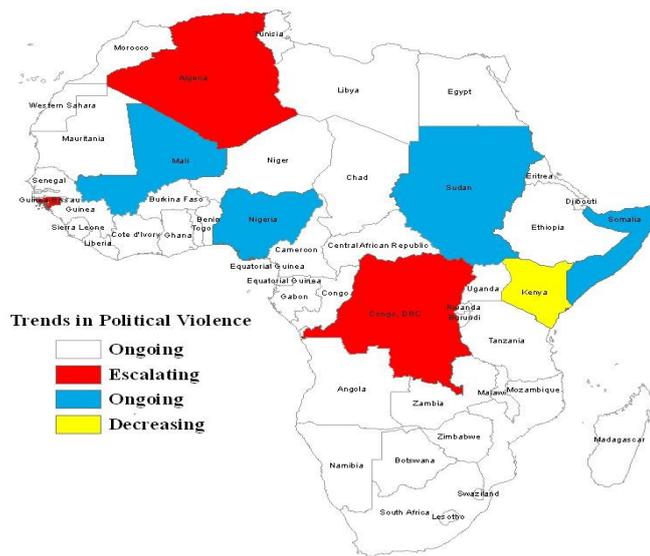
Another important area which the SDGs seek to promote Human Rights and avoid traps is the emphasis it places on the principles of equality, non-discrimination and access for all. There are two goals of the SDGs which cover this aspect of Human rights and development. Goal 5 on gender equality and Goal 10 which focus on income inequality (social, economic and political discrimination); the idea is to leave no one behind. Specifically, SDGs understands that inequality in income is antithetical to foundations of many societies and can be the

foundation for further poverty traps and conflicts. With the “leave no one behind” slogan, the SDGs attempts to link international human rights; thus availing further opportunity for NHRIs to perform more in the post-2015 era.

On the side of good governance, the SDGs capture a deeper need for good governance (which the MDGs did not cover) as a means to development. International institutions support this by positing that “the quality of governance plays a defining role in supporting the economic, social and environmental pillars of the SDGs” (UNDP, 2014). The SDGs thus underlines three key aspects of governance which must be achieved to escape poverty traps. These are: Effective Governance (which focus on the capacity of institutions to resolve problems of public policy and implement effective rules); Equitable Governance (which focus on equitable application of the rule of law and the distribution of wealth and opportunity within society); and finally, Good Governance – itself- (which focuses and encapsulates enhanced participation, transparency, accountability, and public access to information) (Biermann,et al, 2014). The opportunity which exists for developing countries, including those in Africa, is to use equity as an important precondition and key to engage good governance and also as a tool in advancing the positive transformation of existing institutions. But doing this might be a cumbersome task; however, the United Nations calls for this challenge not to dissuade individual countries from carrying out the ideals of good governance as failure of this could breed traps and conflicts (mostly in Africa where conditions for this is already ripe).

Democratic governance is another way which African governments can combat impending security challenges which arise from poverty traps. The presence of genuine democratic institutions can never be over emphasized on any polity. Specifically, this will go a long way to ensure instilled confidence in government does not dwindle. In its Poverty Report for the year 2000, the UNDPnotes the importance of governance as “the missing link” in the fight against poverty. Scholars also have identified good governance and genuine democratic institutions as link to fight poverty in Africa. Researchers like Anyang (2001) examines good governance as this missing link and highlighted democratic values, peace, economic development, bargaining power with developed countries, zero tolerance for corruption and

ensuring citizen rights as preconditions for poverty reduction in Africa.



*Source: Armed Conflict Location and Dataset 2012*

**Figure 4.** Africa showing conflict regions as at April 2012

By observing recommendations like these, it could give African people hope in such precarious times that such poverty situations would not last. African governments may write good plans for poverty reduction; raise revenue to implement such plans and identify targets and yet fail to deliver anything tangible in terms of poverty reduction. Anyang (2001) thus contends responsive and accountable institutions in African countries should be integrated fully on the agenda of public policy implementation. Ideally this will indicate her capacity to deliver and be held accountable for the resources at its disposal. African governments need to tackle wide spread corruption which is endemic in her economies. Authoritative sources have associated poverty in Africa to corruption. Sachs and his collaborators at the Millennium Project, for example argue on the implication of corruption on poverty in Africa. They contend that the quality of governance is proportionate to the amount of money available for it. By adjusting a number of corruption-related indicators for poverty, they found that African governance is not bad by international standards, pointing out that poor countries cannot afford the corruption controls available in better-resourced ones (Sachs et al, 2004).

Their argument is hinged of the fact that certainly ‘corruption-related indicators of poverty’ in Africa need to be adjusted for poverty reduction. Indicators viz political

patronage, money laundering, bribery, embezzlement, invoicing and over estimation of project and contracts have been identified among many others. Corruption in African economies induce further hardships and hunger, more so, irresponsible leadership adds to this already precarious situation. The people in Africa should be able to trust their governments to address these structural dislocations and mass dislocation of poverty.

### CONCLUSION

Mahatma Gandhi once said, “Although the poor only understand the politics of bread and salt, they are not blind. Poverty is the worst form of violence” (Duflo, 2013). The continued growth of poverty no doubt portends a threat to Africa’s internal peace. Prior, such threat has been conceived in terms of increased hunger during conflict/insecurity periods. But evidence suggests Africa’s teeming population (mostly young), increase arms flow (in and around Africa) and continuous raise in poverty rates presents new forms of security challenges which could cause collapse of her state system. This threat to Africa’s development is real and needs to be combated. The World Bank President while delivering a lecture in George Town University, U.S. identifies the difficult task of combating poverty in both conflict and conflict-prone areas. Jim Kim noted the level of economic inequality within the world’s economic system and how it portends a new

form of conflict. Furthermore, he highlights how developing countries would be mostly affected by this growing trend. Africa is thus presented with an opportunity to act before her poverty traps would catalyze new security challenges. Although the SDGs does not cover all answers, but focus on it might be a start to escape these traps. To doubt such solutions would impede any meaningful effort towards development and poverty reduction. To tackle this impending threat, her democratic and good governance ratings has to improve while recognizing that the fight against poverty goes beyond just improving social conditions and development but looking into promoting human rights as provided by the SDGs. African governments have to understand that this fight includes fundamental rights of Africans everywhere to live and attain their full economic potentials unhindered by poverty traps. The SDGs avails such opportunity, however, her weak institutions is desirous of NHRIs and Civil societies to show the need and importance of Human right sensitive policies and above all ensure equitable distribution of the commonwealth. Only with such can sustainable development be achieved and traps truly escaped.

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