

Hunger and Food Insecurity in Nigeria: A Critical Survey of Policy Interventions

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Abstract

An adage in Yoruba of Western Nigeria says *ti ebi ba ti kuro ninu ise, ise buse*, which means, once hunger, is conquered then poverty is alleviated. This adage, no doubt, echoes the importance of food to life as well as to the sustenance of the society. Nigeria is identified in this work as a country faced with hunger despite its richness in human and natural resources, and availability of arable land. Between 1975 and 2017, both the military and civilian governments had implemented different agricultural policies aimed at mitigating the problem of food insecurity in Nigeria. Some of the policies include; River Basin Development Authority (RBDA), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution (GR) and National Fadama Development Project (NFDP). This paper has engaged in a critical assessment of these agricultural policies and discovered, based on the method of qualitative analysis that the narrative of hunger and food insecurity remains unabated in the country. Therefore, the paper argues that the problem of hunger and food insecurity will be largely resolved in Nigeria if the country's agricultural policy is guided by the ethics of benevolence.

Keywords: Hunger; Food; Food Security; Benevolence; Agricultural policy.

Introduction

This work identifies hunger and food insecurity as a problem that requires an urgent solution in Nigeria. If a workable solution is achieved, then the negative consequences of hunger and food insecurity in Nigeria will have been properly prevented. It is against this backdrop that this work offers the ethics of benevolence as a panacea for the problem of hunger and food insecurity in Nigeria. The work is divided into six segments. The first segment is the introduction while the second segment dwells cogently on the concept of hunger.

The third and fourth segments discuss food security, population and Nigeria's initiatives towards the attainment of food security. The fifth segment focuses on how to combat hunger and food insecurity in Nigeria through the ethics of benevolence. The sixth segment is the conclusion.

What is Hunger?

The term hunger sometimes connotes strong desire, aspiration, ambition, or crave for something (knowledge or self worth). For example, Ayomide hungers for knowledge or Ajoke hungers for self-worth. This meaning of hunger is not illuminating enough to provide a comprehensive perspective to the question, 'what is hunger'? In other words, if I rely on 'strong desire for something' as the meaning of hunger, then the goal of this paper would have been defeated *ab initio*. It is in this vein that the term hunger has become a point of controversy among scholars. Lewit and Kerrebrock, for instance, label the hunger that arises from insufficient economic, family or community resources as *resource-constrained hunger* which, for them, "is closely related to poverty and markedly distinct from the everyday premealtime hunger experienced across the income spectrum." (Lewit and Kerrebrock 129) Mohini Giri, a woman-feminist, conceives hunger as "rape, molestation, dowry, illiteracy, female feticide, female infanticide and above all, it is patriarchy. That is what hunger is all about to me." (Cited by Weisfeld-Adams and Andrzejewski 2) For Anderson, hunger is a potential but not necessarily consequence of food insecurity (Anderson 1560).

Apart from insisting that hunger is a natural and inherent part of human condition, James Vernon reveals the three dimensions to the modern understanding of hunger, namely, the divine, the moral and the social. He explains the divine as a period in history when hunger was perceived as a divine retribution for the sins of man while the moral dimension captured a period when the hungry were blamed for their hunger, especially for not taking the advantage of dignity in labour. Vernon elucidated the social dimension to mean when hunger was recognized as a collective social problem. In this third sense, the hungry, according to him, were now regarded as "innocent victims of failing political and economic systems over which they had no control." (Vernon 2-3).

While most technologically advanced countries in the West treat the hungry as victims of leadership deficit, Nigerian policies

towards food security have left much to be desired. This is so because its food and agriculture policies between 1975 and 2017 have implicitly condemned the hungry for their hunger. The current case of malnutrition being experienced by the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the northeast of Nigeria is a cogent example. Therefore, the paper adopts the use of the term 'hunger' in relation to lack of food; given that hunger in this context has the potential to not only take away the self-esteem but also the self-confidence of its victims. As hunger attacks adults so also it troubles and rattles children. Hunger does not respect the size, age, gender, position, race or colour pigmentation of an individual. If left unchecked, hunger has enormous capacity to disturb, contaminate and pollute human reasoning and initiatives. Therefore, it must not continue to foster in Nigeria unhindered!

Food Security and Population Growth

Now that we have a clearer understanding of the meaning of hunger in relation to lack of food, the problem of food insecurity may be difficult to tackle if proper attention is not paid to the growing population of the world. Asthana and Asthana disclose that "the world population is expected to be above 7.0 billion by the year 2010 AD and 8.25 billion by year 2025 AD" (14). In the same breath, United Nation projected that the world population will be 9.1 billion by the 2050 (UN, cited by Wright and Boorse 4). But recent information from Population Reference Bureau reveals that world population in 2016 was 7.4 billion while Nigeria's population was 187 million that same year (PRB, Web). The argument here is that if world population keeps increasing, the demand for agricultural products (foods) will also increase because there will be more mouths to be fed at the global level. This means that there is a proportional relationship between world population growth and food demand in the world. Likewise, if the three components of population (fertility, mortality and migration) are not properly documented in any country, then such a country may find it difficult to attain food security. Therefore, actions must be taken to march international food productions with the growing and increasingly urban population globally.

This underscores why the attainment of food security has become a priority for those nations that have genuine concerns for the wellbeing of their citizens. It suffices to say that satisfying the nutritional needs of every citizen is the focal point of most technologically advanced countries like America, Britain, Germany and China. According to Scorbie, food security is at the front burner of

global discourse because food problem “is seen to arise not from the fact that there are poor nations, but that there are poor people in all nations” (Scobie 633). The absence of a sound moral principle to guide agricultural policies in Nigeria is responsible for the country’s inability to attain the enviable status of ‘a food secured country’. Hence, hunger is presently on the rise in Nigeria. It is even much more prevalent in the northeast of Nigeria since Boko Haram (a group that was formed by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002 but turned violent in 2009) has rendered subsistent farming, let alone mechanised farming, almost impossible in the affected areas (Cook 3).

What flows from the above is the question: what is food security and how can it be attained in Nigeria? This question shall not be left unanswered in this work. Given that right to food was recognised in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. However, food security as a term became flourished during the World Food Conference in Rome in 1974. Food security was defined in the conference in terms of “food supply - assuring the availability and price stability of basic foodstuffs at the international and national level” (Ritson 4). The most widely acceptable definition of food security originated from the World Food Summit organized by Food Agricultural Organisation (FAO) in November, 1996. The definition reads thus:

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO, Web)

A modified version of the above definition was adopted during the State of Food Insecurity in 2001 with the proclamation that “Food security [is] a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (Engler 2326). Accordingly, the four pillars of food security are availability, access, stability and utilization.

AVAILABILITY	ACCESS	STABILITY	UTILIZATION
Domestic production	Purchasing power	Weather variability	Food safety
Import capacity	Income of population	Price fluctuation	Hygiene
Food stocks	Transport and market infrastructure	Political factors	Diet quality and diversity
Food aid		Economic factors	

(UNICEF, Web; Capone, Bilali, Debs, Cardone and Driouech 13-22; Napoli 22)

Nigeria’s Initiatives to Attain Food Security

The reality of hunger in Nigeria today, occasioned by lack of food, is enough to compel anyone to think that the Nigerian government has implemented no policy since independence (1960) to address the problem of food insecurity in the country. Yet, a variety of agricultural policies have been formulated and implemented towards achieving food security in Nigeria. These include: (1) River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs), (2) Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), (3) Green Revolution (GR), (4) Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI) and (5) National Fadama Development Project (NFDP). Analyses of these policies will help us to understand why they have failed to produce the expected results.

River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs)

The establishment of eleven River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs) in 1975/76 by the Federal Government of Nigeria was a reaction to the severe drought experienced in the country between 1972 and 1974 (Kumolu 2013). The number of RBDAs was increased from eleven to twelve in 1979 through the River Basin Development Authorities Act (Oriola and Alabi 515; Raheem and Bako 580). The list of the twelve RBDAs are: (1) Anambra-Imo River Basin development Authority, (2) Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority, (3) Chad Basin Development Authority, (4) Cross River Basin development Authority, (5) Hadejia- Jama’are River Basin Development Authority, (6) Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority, (7) Lower Niger River Basin Development Authority, (8) Niger Delta River Basin Development Authority, (9) Ogun-Osun River Basin Development Authority, (10) Sokoto Rima River Basin Development Authority, (11)

Upper Benue River Basin Development Authority, and (12) Upper Niger River Basin Development Authority (Akanmu, Eluwa and Ekpo 106-114, Akindele and Adebo 55-62)

The Federal Government created RBDAs for the purpose of promoting all-year round agricultural activities in order for Nigeria to attain self-sufficiency in food production. Therefore, RBDAs were regarded by the Federal Government of Nigeria as a development model with the potentials for bridging development gap between the urban and rural dwellers. The spread of RBDAs across the six geopolitical zones of the country was intended to bring development closer to the grassroots. The mandates of RBDAs included but not limited to the provision of water for irrigation and domestic water supply, improvement of navigation, hydro-electric power generation, recreational facilities and fisheries projects. These core mandates of RBDAs were to be “achieved through surface impoundment of water by constructing small, medium and large dams, which would enable an all-year round farming activities in the country” (eWash, Web)

This year (2018) makes it 43years after the establishment of RBDAs in Nigeria. Yet, the basins have failed to serve as a catalyst for the attainment of food sufficiency in the country. Nigeria is still a country that depends heavily on rain fed agriculture and one seasonal farming period. The success of RBDAs has been constrained by inadequate trained manpower, lack of dependable data, administration and policies change, corruption, bureaucracy, over-reliance on international agribusiness for supply of heavy equipment, management and poor funding by the government (Anokwuru 4-5). In 2016, the federal government through the minister of Agriculture and Rural Development drew the attention of Nigerians to a whopping \$700m being spent annually on importation of fish in terms of foreign exchange due to the failure of agricultural policies in the country. If RBDAs had lived up to expectation, I argue, Nigeria would have attained an enviable status of “a food secured country”.

Operation Feed the Nation (OFN)

Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) was inaugurated in 1976 after the establishment of federal ministry of agriculture in 1970. Before the OFN, there were National Accelerated Food Production Project (NAFPP, 1972), River Basin Development Authority (RBDA, 1975/76), Agricultural Development Project (ADP, 1975) but none of them

enjoyed a wide spread campaign as OFN. In other words, all the agricultural policies implemented before the launch of OFN were not as popular as OFN. This is so because the Nigerian government, at the end of the civil war in 1969, believed that the fundamental economic problems such as youth unemployment, inflation and rural-urban migration were off-shoot of the neglect of the agricultural sector. This explained why the Federal government of Nigeria paid special attention to agriculture in its reconstruction scheme immediately after the civil war.

The Federal Military Government headed by General Olusegun Obasanjo reeled out the core objectives of OFN as follows, to:

- mobilize the nation towards self-sufficiency and self-reliance in food production.
- encourage the sector of the community relying on food purchase to grow its own food.
- create a general pride in agriculture through the realization that a nation which cannot feed itself cannot be proud of itself.
- put into effective use some of the findings that have accumulated in our universities and research institutes over the years.
- promote a lasting and meaningful practical opportunity to all university and secondary school students to experience methods of problem solving before graduation.
- encourage balanced nutrition and thereby produce a healthy nation. (Agber, Iortima and Imbur 245, Anyanwu 20-25)

With the above sound objectives, one would have expected OFN to change the narrative of poor policy implementation in Nigeria. Instead, the tales of bad policy implementation continued even with OFN! For instance, the traditional farmers who grudgingly embraced the new method of farming offered by OFN got disappointed when the improved seedlings, pesticides, quality fertilizers, tractors and other agricultural implements promised by the government were never provided. Because the money budgeted for those agricultural resources and implements was diverted in large sum to the private accounts of the government officials (Agber, Iortima and Imbur 246).

There was also the problem of inaccessibility to market, especially by the small holder farmers, despite the introduction of minimum prices for agricultural commodities by the government. It

was on record that OFN encouraged the in-flow of very young farmers who lacked the requisite knowledge in farming to participate in livestock agriculture, an exercise which later turned counterproductive since the inexperienced farmers were unable to cope with the livestock diseases that caused havoc to their farms. Therefore, OFN ended as a failed scheme like those agricultural policies before it in Nigeria.

Green Revolution (GR)

There cannot be adequate food on the table of Nigerians without a good agricultural policy. There cannot be a good agricultural policy without a good economic policy. Also, a good economic policy that is devoid of a good political culture will prolong the unfortunate experience of Nigerians with hunger. In this connection, the failure of Green Revolution (GR) programme in Nigeria is traceable to the absence of a good economic policy and lack of a vibrant political culture that seriously frowns at corruption of any kind (I will establish at the later part of this paper how a good economic policy and a vibrant political culture could evolve from the ethics of benevolence). Unlike Nigeria, the existence of a good economic policy and a vibrant political culture actually motivated the birth and success of Green Revolution in “Asia, Mexico and Latin America, a feat pioneered by Dr. Norman Borlaug” (Akande 3).

Indeed, GR was a dramatic turn of event in the field of agriculture in that it brought about a shift from indigenous and subsistent approach to agriculture to a scientific and technological one. It adopted a method known as multiple cropping, or, agricultural intensification to improve on food productivity globally. In other words, GR encourages “the breeding of high-yielding varieties with the use of agrochemicals like fertilizers, herbicides, integrated pest management practices and timely farm operations” (Akande 3). Former President Shehu Shagari was credited with the launch of GR program in Nigeria in 1980. The program was intended to proffer quick solution to the problem of food in Nigeria in the same way that it recorded tremendous successes (especially in wheat, maize and rice productions) in Asia, Mexico and Latin America.

To make GR programme a success story in Nigeria, the government of Shehu Shagari activated fully the implementation of Land Use Decree of Olusegun Obasanjo’s administration, his immediate predecessor. The implication of this was that the Federal Government

had (still has) absolute control over any land in Nigeria. Following the implementation of Land Use Decree was the setting up of Green Revolution Council presided over by the executive president Shehu Shagari. Accordingly:

The decisions taken by the council are passed onto the appropriate ministries for implementation. There were also other sub-committees set up in relation to the implementation of green revolution program by the federal government. All technical decisions pass through the sub-committee before they are presented to the council through the national committee (Nwaobi 5-6).

Specifically, GR was expected to boost the productions of food crops, livestock and fish productions in Nigeria, such that, the rural dwellers would engage actively in the food productions in the country, thereby discouraging rural-urban migration within the country. The programme was also meant to enhance foreign exchange earnings for the government. In spite of the fact that Shagari's administration, via the national seed services, made available 16 tons of maize and 32 tons of rice for distributions to farmers for plantation in 1981, GR programme failed to achieve its main objective in Nigeria (Nwaobi 6).

The land use decree is regarded in this work as one of the main problems of GR in Nigeria because the government's hegemony over the land resulted to the alienation of farmers from arable land. Other problems associated with GR were absence of essential infrastructures, serious delay in the supply of farm inputs, inefficient transportation system and extreme weather condition such as excessive or shortage of rainfall. Lack of adequate monitoring on the part of the government officials apart from perceived corruption in the whole scheme marred the success of GR in Nigeria. For instance, Ikenna Nzimiro (1985) argues that GR in Nigeria is "a revolution for the rich, the middlemen, compradors and kulaks". I regard this submission as less controversial.

Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI)

In 1986, the Military head of State, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, established the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI) to show his commitment to rural development in Nigeria. General Babangida was convinced that through DFRRI the positive impact of his administration would be felt greatly in all the

rural communities in Nigeria where more than 70 per cent of Nigeria's population domiciled. DFRRRI was particularly designed to revolutionise agriculture in the rural areas given that good roads, water supply, good health facilities and supply of electricity to rural communities will enhance food productions in Nigeria. DFRRRI was administered at three tiers of government, namely, Federal, State and Local Governments as mandated by DFRRRI ACT of 1986. Some of the special functions of DFRRRI are as follows:

To identify, involve and support viable local community organisations in the effective mobilisation of the rural population for sustained rural developmental activities, bearing in mind the need for promoting greater community participation and economic self reliance of the rural community; (b) to identify areas of high production potential for the country's priority food and fibre requirement and to support production of such commodities along agro-ecological zones within the context of one national market with unimpeded inter-State trade in farm produce; (c) to formulate and support a national rural feeder-road network programme involving construction, rehabilitation, improvement and maintenance especially in relation to the nation's food self-sufficiency programme as well as general rural development; (d) to formulate and support a national rural water-supply programme with emphasis on full initial involvement of local communities and local government personnel to ensure sustained maintenance of built infrastructures (Lawyard, Web)

While Anokwuru argued that DFRRRI was better implemented than other agricultural schemes before it, Ejue believed that DFRRRI also went the way of its predecessors because of lack of policy/programme continuity in Nigeria (Anokwuru 16-17). This work shares the perspective of the later. Despite General Babagida's strong commitment to the success of DFRRRI in the rural communities in Nigeria, DFRRRI as a scheme, still failed to surmount some problems, such as, mismanagement of funds, lack of proper focus, poor quality of infrastructures, lack of programme accountability, favouritism on the award of contracts, ineffective grassroots monitoring, lack of follow up mechanisms and military highhandedness. Therefore, when General

Babagida left power as head of state in 1993, DFRRRI died a natural death.

National Fadama Development Project (NFDP)

National Fadama Development Project (NFDP) was launched in 1993 in order to deal with the problems of food insecurity as well as to drastically reduce high rate of poverty, especially in the rural communities in Nigeria. The scheme started with phase one tagged FADAMA I which spanned between 1993 and 1999. The second Phase, dubbed FADAMA II, was introduced in 2004 by Olusegun Obasanjo having become the democratically elected President of Nigeria in 1999. Nigeria is currently running the third phase of Fadama Project known as FADAMA III due to what I would refer to as 'relative successes' recorded with FADAMA I and II.

For the purpose of clarification, Fadama is an indigenous word, derived from Hausa language, to describe irrigable lands. Such irrigable lands are called "Akuro in Yoruba land" (Bature, Sanni and Adebayo 11). Ugwumba and Okechukwu describe Fadama as lands that are often "waterlogged during the rainy season but retain moisture during the dry season" (Ugwumba and Okechukwu 75). Consequently, Fadama scheme is meant to add value to the flooded plains of the savannah since the potentials of such irrigable lands are partially harnessed in Nigeria. This brings about the development of small irrigation motorised pumps and shallow tube wells for small scale irrigation farming system (SSIFS). SSIFS is not only cost effective, it is also in tune with the needs of the local farmers when compared with large scale irrigation projects so far practiced in Nigeria (Agber, Iortima and Imbur 247, Jammeh, Web).

At inception, NFDP office started the phase one of the scheme with only six (6) states. In 2017, under FADAMA III, all the 36 states including the FCT are currently implementing Fadama Projects under the supervision of NFDP. The World Bank (the scheme's largest financier), the federal government of Nigeria and participating states are the three unified components financing the scheme in Nigeria. The FADAMA farmers are encouraged to form associations or groups in order for them to access agriculture loans. Farmers under the scheme are instructed to go into the productions of staple crops such as rice, cassava, sorghum, okra, cabbages and tomatoes.

It is true that FADAMA scheme is applauded as a successful agriculture scheme in terms of implementation, but the reality of hunger in Nigeria today has watered down any success that could be

recorded for the implementation of the scheme in Nigeria. In other words, FADAMA Project cannot be said to have achieved its desired result when the prices of local foods are beyond the reach of the rural and urban dwellers in Nigeria. In fact, the prices of rice, yam, garri (a local Nigeria food derived from cassava crop) tomatoes and sorghum are unfriendly to most households in Nigeria of today. Hence, there is hunger in Nigeria!

Combating Hunger in Nigeria through Ethics of Benevolence

Hunger, as understood in this paper, ought to be alien to Nigeria if not for the lack of commitment by different governments to truly make Nigeria a food secured nation. This happens largely because none of Nigeria's agricultural policy has been deeply rooted in an ethical principle. The most plausible ethical principle to guide Nigeria towards the attainment of food security is the ethics of benevolence.

Benevolence is a moral virtue in ethics and it is a subset of virtue theory. It occupies an important place in the history of Western philosophy because it is one of the character traits admirable in ethics despite the challenge of psychological egoism. According to Joshua, "*psychological egoism* is the thesis that we are always deep down motivated by what we perceive to be in our own self-interest" (Joshua, Web). In other words, psychological egoism "is the view that the only ultimate goal in action is the agent's own good" (Blum, Web). In contrast, "benevolence involves a concern for the well-being of others rather than one's own" (Kelley 11). Karakas and Sarigollu define benevolence;

A philosophic belief in the potential goodness of humanity and the corresponding belief that humans have an obligation to use their natural instincts and developmental attitudes of love and charity; an inclination to do good, to do kind or charitable acts. (Karakas and Sarigollu 6)

If morality is about the good of others, then benevolence is so central to morality. As a character trait, benevolence promotes in us a special disposition to act in the interest of others rather than to act in our own interest. In this sense, an action that benefits only the agent is antithetical to the ethics of benevolence. Benevolence is about "a positive attitude toward people in general, a desire for their well-being

and for peaceful, cooperative relationships with them” (Kelly 7). Kelly further explains that “genuine benevolence is supposed to involve an unselfish disposition to care for and help another person for his own sake—in pursuit of *his* good, not ours” (Kelly 11) In this connection, a benevolent person is the one who acts generously in response to the suffering of others. Benevolent leaders are those with “an inclination to do good, kind or charitable acts due to a felt obligation to use their developmental and intentional attributes of love and charity” (Karakas and Sarigollu 2). Thus, a leader who has no natural sense of sympathy for others or a leader who deliberately refuses to cultivate a sense of sympathy for others can never be benevolent. This explains why “sympathy functions as the engine of benevolence” in David Hume’s moral psychology (Fieldman 1444). Tom Beauchat notes that;

Benevolence is Hume's most important moral principle of human nature, but he also uses the term “benevolence” to designate a class of virtues rooted in goodwill, generosity, and love directed at others. Hume finds benevolence in many manifestations: friendship, charity, compassion, etc. (Beauchat, Web)

If we really consider other people's feelings, we will be predisposed to care about how they will feel when we perform any action towards them. It should be noted that the ethics of benevolence is not foreign to us in Africa because the promotion of the well-being of others is one of the ethical virtues in Africa. According to Omoregbe:

The essence of goodness in African traditional ethics consists in doing good to others, while the essence of evil consists in doing harm to others... morality in African traditional thought is essentially interpersonal and social, with a basis in human well-being. For the African is, traditionally, his brother's keeper and is concerned about his well-being. Individualism is abhorrent to the traditional African mentality. (Omoregbe 141)

With this framework in hand, I can now apply the principle of benevolence to the problem of food insecurity in Nigeria. As earlier said, hunger is visible and real in Nigeria of today. Its impact is more felt by the children since many children in Nigeria are suffering from malnutrition. That is, malnutrition, stunted growth and under nutrition are recurrent issues in all the 36 states of Nigeria plus FCT, even though

it is much more prevalent in the northeast. It is against this backdrop I argue that the failure of various agricultural programmes in Nigeria can be traced to lack of a philosophical grounding. This work offers the ethics of benevolence because it is potent enough to change the mindset of an individual or government towards thinking and acting for the good of others if adopted as a guide to action. It has that compelling power to constantly remind the so-called leaders in Nigeria of their primary role to the governed. That governance is all about making life better for the governed and not about making the life of the governed miserable. This is so because benevolence is about alleviating and proffering lasting solutions to the sufferings of others. It is about care and positive attitude towards people's suffering in general.

On the one hand, being benevolent, at the individual level, involves a character trait that frowns strongly at any form of exploitation. When an individual is truly benevolent, jacking up prices of food stuffs in the name of profits would never be an alternative way of making money. It is malevolent, to say the least, for us to take advantage of our positions as food vendors, secretary in an office, bankers, teachers, lecturers, health practitioners, bus conductors and so on to exploit unsuspected clients or customers. On the other hand, if the ethics of benevolence is keyed into by the government, corruption would be tamed considerably in Nigeria. The reason is that a benevolent leader or person would not corner the funds meant for the execution of projects aimed at making Nigeria food secured to her/his private pocket. Doing so can never be justified as acting in the interest of the masses. Also, a benevolent leader would not promote impunity in government or financial recklessness. Any government that genuinely has the interest of the people at heart would not embark on white elephant projects. In the same token, a government that truly cares about making Nigeria food secured would not plunge its economy into recession through profligacy. Even when it happens; such government will quickly come up with a workable and result oriented economic recovery policy, just to nip in the bud the prevalence of hunger in the country.

On 5th Sept., 2017, the National Bureaus of Statistics revealed that Nigeria was out of recession. But the reality on ground does not encourage such optimism. An average family in Nigeria of today cannot afford three square meals per day, be it nutritional or otherwise. If Nigeria is truly out of recession then prices of consumable goods ought

to have been crashed down considerably. This is not the reality in all the markets in Nigeria presently. Therefore, Nigerians are hungry! Also, the connection between food security and a vibrant political atmosphere cannot be dismissed. Only a benevolent government would allow genuine opposition to thrive. For a vibrant opposition always put the government of the day on its toes by discussing issues that bother on the wellbeing of the populace (such as shortage of food in Nigeria) without being clamped down or labeled as a detractor by the government of the day. This is what the ethics of benevolence as a guide to action can motivate leaders to achieve in Nigeria.

There is the argument that the ethics of benevolence can produce undesirable outcomes such as breeding lazy and docile citizens who may begin to see the government as a 'charitable father' and may conclude that there is no need for them to work for their daily bread. In spite of this, I am convinced that a food secured Nigeria is better than a Nigeria where the masses are wallowing in hunger and abject poverty. When Nigeria is food secured, the spate of environmental degradation will reduce drastically. The point here is that it will be easier to preach environmental sustainability to a food secured human than to a human who is suffering from hunger. Only a full belly would contribute constructively to the development of the nation. Consequently, if Nigeria's agricultural policy, both at the formative and executing stages, is guided by the ethics of benevolence, then providing food for all Nigerians so as to end hunger in the land will become the priority of the government at every level.

Conclusion

Corruption, incompetence, bureaucracy, lack of proper focus, lack of continuity of agricultural policies, favouritism on the award of contracts and so on, have been identified in this work as problems confronting agricultural programmes and policies in Nigeria since 1975. The consequence is hunger in Nigeria today. For Nigeria to be food secured, we have recommended the adoption of the ethics of benevolence as a guide to our action both at the formative and executing stages of agricultural policy in the country. When the ethics of benevolence is adopted by all, the result will be positively overwhelming because there will be enough dietary food on the table of every Nigeria.

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