

## WATER, SANITATION AND POVERTY IN THE CHANGING WORLD. CASE OF NIGERIA

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**Abstract:** Water, sanitation, and hygiene are rights to everybody no matter which country one belongs. In developing countries, people are being denied the rights. This has resulted in poverty, diseases, and death especially in children. In line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the UNDP responded to one of the key issues by embarking on programs on water governance for poverty reduction in Africa, Asia, the Pacific and other areas where they fall short of water, sanitation, and hygiene. The paper aims to highlight the water-related challenges facing countries globally, Africa and Nigeria. To achieve this, the paper focuses on the effects lack of water has on women and children. The effects include sickness, death, loss of money on drugs, time wasting on sourcing for water, educational, other social and economic effects. Also, the causes of water, sanitation, hygiene, and poverty were discussed. From the foregoing, it was observed that most of the MDGs goals in developing countries recorded only substantive progress. It is hoped that if recommendations in this paper followed to the letter coupled with the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the world will be transformed in terms of water, sanitation, and hygiene.

**Key words:** water, poverty, MDGs, Africa, Nigeria, Aids, children

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### INTRODUCTION

Poverty, as defined by WHO (2016), is low income (less than the US \$2 a day). It was explained, that poverty is linked to a range of human attributes, including health. This means that the poorest of the poor anywhere in the world will have worst health, housing, education, and even water. The World Bank described by New Brunswick, Canada (2016) put it as having many faces like lack of money, not being able to participate in recreational activities, not being able to send children to school, not being able to pay for medical facilities and so on. In a nutshell, poverty is a menace that affects one when the basic standard of living cannot be met.

Water is a universal and important solvent needed in life. It has many uses depending on wants of individuals. Water covers more than 70% of the earth's surface. It makes what we call

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groundwater and surface water such as well, river, rain, stream, etc (Fashae et al., 2017; Herman, 2010; Khongwir et al., 2014; Slimani and Kalla, 2017; Yasin et al., 2015).

Lack of safe and good water and proper sanitation is known as water poverty. According to the Water Project (2016), WHO (2016), UNDP (2014) and Living Water Africa (2016), about one billion people do not have access to clean and save water. In many places of the world, access to water has been potentially a critical factor in alleviating poverty and enhancement of economic growth.

WHO (2015), provided these water facts:

- I. Globally, at least 1.8 billion people use drinking-water source contaminated with feces;
- II. By 2025, half of the world's population will be living in water-stressed areas;
- III. 2.6 billion people have gained access to an improved drinking water source since 1990;
- IV. In 2015, 91% of the world's population had access to an improved drinking water source;
- V. 4.2 billion people now enjoy the highest level of water access to a piped water connection at their homes; 2.4 billion people access water through other improved sources including public taps, protected wells, and boreholes;
- VI. 663 million people worldwide rely on unimproved water sources, including 159 million dependent on surface water;
- VII. At least 10% of the world's population is thought to consume food irrigated by wastewater;
- VIII. Two out of five people without access to an improved drinking water source live in Africa;
- IX. By 2015 water scarcity is expected to affect more than 1.8 billion people-hurting agricultural workers and poor farmers the most.

### **GLOBAL CHALLENGES**

Lack of potable water has greater effects on women and children. They are forced to use many hours each time in the course of looking for water. They needed to trek, carry the heavy load and water and even their babies at their back. United Nations estimates that in sub-Saharan Africa, 40 billion hours per year are lost when trying to collect water. The social and economic effects caused by a lack of clean water are often the highest priorities of African communities when they speak of their own development (Water Project, 2016).

Other attendant problems caused by lack water and poverty are healthcare costs. This global cost is due to the diseases that affect the people combined with poor hygiene. This causes the death of children under the age of five and contributes to up to 50% of malnutrition. Around 700,000 children die each year of diseases. Families spend a lot on purchasing drugs.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon once said that an estimated 42,000 people die weekly due to low-water borne diseases and lack of adequate and proper hygiene. Educational goals are largely affected due to effects of poor water and poverty. Majority of people who supposed to attend school and work would not be able to do this due to sickness and time wasted during the time of searching.

According to WHO/UNICEF (2006) Statistics, about 315,000 children under five years die every day through diarrhoeal caused by drinking dirty water and poor sanitation. Furthermore, more than 650 million people in the world do not have access to safe water, every year also 60 million children do not have the opportunity to sanitation, and nearly half of the people who had the opportunity to gain access to water in 1990 to 2010 resides in India and China.

According to Africa Infrastructure Country Diagnostic (AICD) study it was revealed that funding for water and sanitation infrastructure is shot of US \$115 million a year in sub-Saharan countries (Hutton, 2013), while a global estimate of \$535 billion is needed as investment to reach universal access, or \$26.75 billion per year between 2010 and 2030 (WHO, 2012).

### **POVERTY AND WATER IN AFRICA CHALLENGES**

Poverty is an epidemic result in Africa due to political instability, ethnicity, climate change lack of access to clean drinking water, and many other man-made factors (figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Pictures Speak for Themselves – Water and Poverty  
Source: Living Water Africa, 2018

Over a million of African citizens are not opportune to have access to good, potable and safe water. This problem is solvable but due to poverty and selfish interests of the leaders, this seems attainable. The most affected people are women and children. A day cannot pass by without inflicting the injuries on them. Imagine somebody trekking several kilometers in search of what can be termed 'scarc commodity' at many times especially during the dry seasons. During these periods human, animals and farming activities will be in dear need of water, especially portable and safe water for 'man and animals'. No doubt, there will be scrambling for water, during this, there may be water pollution.

WHO has shown that the time taken in the search for water costs a fortune. It was depicted in terms of economics that for every \$ 1 invested in water and sanitation, there is always an economic return of between \$ 3 and \$ 34 (Water Aid, 2016, The Water Project, 2016). Water Aid is a non-profit organization in Africa. The aim of this outfit has been a charitable one. They were able to execute this as a water charity. Their impact has affected so many African countries by carrying out advocacy works to influence policy makers through local partners who are the key stakeholders who can reach those communities most in need of assistance. Their works are focused on reaching the poorest and most marginalized people of the areas visited.

According to Water Aid (2016), Zambia as one of the fast-growing economies of the world lost over half of his population due to poverty and lack of safe and basic toilets, also over 5 million do not have access to safe water. Ghana empowered with natural resources has many of her citizenries die due to unemployment, poverty, and lack of water. Tanzania's problems could be due to the hot (dry) climate lack of safe water to use and not enough to grow plant crops. These issues have serious effects on children education, livelihood, well-being, and deaths especially children under age 5 years (Table 1). Other countries have almost the same crisis rocking the citizens of the nations (Water Aid, 2016).

**Table 1.** The summary of problems identified in ten different countries

Data source: Water Aid, Accessed (2016)

S/N	Country	Lack of Access to Water	Lack of Access to Sanitation	Death & Cause
1	Burkina Faso	14 million	3 million people	>800 children due to diarrhoeal)
2	Ethiopia	42 million	>70 million people	>9000 (diarrhoeal)
3	Lesotho	380,000	1.5 million people	>300 children (")
4	Mozambique	13 million	21.5 million people	4,200 children (")
5	Rwanda	3 million	4.5 million people	600 children under 5 years
6	Sierra Leone	2 million	5 million people	>1,600 children (diarrhoeal)
7	South Africa	650 million	2.3 billion people	>315,000 children
8	Tanzania	44 million	44 million people	>4000 children
9	Ghana	3 million	44 million people	>2,100 children under 5 years
10	Zambia	5 million	8 million people	>1,000 children under 5 years

## **POVERTY AND WATER IN NIGERIA CHALLENGES**

Nigeria is one of the fastest growing economies in Africa. It has the population of more than 165 million people. Politics, religion, and corruption have been the bane behind the reduction in economic growth. According to (IFAD, 2016), 70% of Nigerians live in abject poverty, living on less than US\$1.25 a day. Several international like IFAD, World Bank, WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, and others have financed many projects in Nigeria, but most of the programs are being benefited by urban dwellers, leaving the rural settings to disadvantage, hence causing rural migration.

The objectives of these funding agents targeted the betterment of rural people especially women and children, unfortunately, corruption of the people at the helm of affairs of the nation has made these laudable funding to go down the drain, most projects failed (Johnson, 2013).

In a study conducted by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, Hughes (2015), observed that 22.1% of inhabitants in the urban areas is vulnerable to poverty while only 14.4% of children of ages 0-14 (43.2%). In between the rich and the poor, there is a wide gap. The rich are getting richer, while the poor are getting poorer.

Due to the many factors highlighted earlier, part of the failure of the Nigerian government is lack of provision of clean and save water especially within the rural setting. Many people lack good infrastructures and employment and this project into the poor living standards. In riverine areas, local fishermen needed water for their daily living unfortunately, these waters are contaminated and polluted thereby resulting in less harvesting of fishes, meaning less yield, poor income.

Nowadays, federal, state and local governments have failed citizens with regard to water infrastructure, there are no funds for necessary provisions. Most rural communities suffer a lot like in the other African countries. Those widely affected are women and children. From a case study from Bimining Gaye in the Northern part of the nation, a 60year old woman related her village experience in the sense “that she always dig deep in a dry riverside to collect dirty water for her family. In the raining periods, it is difficult to collect water due to the slippery and dangerous footpaths. Due to the long distance from her home to the farm, she cannot collect more than two buckets a day”. To her, it is a hazardous task coupled with the task of taking care of her family members.

WHO statistics put the happenings in Nigeria as follows:

I. About 57 million people have no opportunity to potable drinking water, while over 130 million people opportuned to have enough sanitation;

II. 680,000 children under 5 years old die every year from diarrhoeal. Like other developing countries due to poor water and sanitation.

Nigerian Government has not deemed it fit prioritized sanitation. Most homes in the urban areas do not have toilets not to talk of rural settings, people have resulted in using bushes as toilets. This has caused health problems. The cost of producing ideal toilets are high and due to poverty level on the increase and lack of lackadaisical attitudes of the government and public health staffs, people have put up carefree attitudes to sanitation. To many people, poverty is a “satanic curse”.

The cost of providing sources of good water like the sinking of boreholes and digging of wells are far above the reach of many people, even harvesting of rainwater from the rooftops are costly. The few people who could fund it have resulted in selling. Many of these sources of water lack hygienic handling and so results in sickness and many government hospitals are not well funded and so lack ideal medications. Many hospitals only prescribe drugs. The cost of procuring these drugs are high, many people resulted in self-medication or taking of local herbs. Sickness and death rates are high due to poverty levels of Nigerians.

In Nigeria, there have been right interventions by international agents and other charitable organizations to provide safe and potable water, but the implementations have been poor due to corruption.

In 2011 the former president Jonathan made pronouncements that in 109 Senatorial districts of Nigeria, motorized boreholes will be drilled, in 18 states, 1000 hand pumps borehole will. The Same year, the former president voted a huge sum to rehabilitate hand pump boreholes, drill motorized boreholes treatment plants, and to complete the abandoned water projects. Despite the laudable plan, it met a Waterloo. The money went down the drain.

## CONCLUSION

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has made substantive progress in many developing countries on the provision of good water but this has been uneven across countries. Efforts are needed to reach the most vulnerable people. It is hoped that the new agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development will safe Nigerians from the issue of water and poverty if the present causing agents of failures are removed or eliminated (United Nations, 2016).

Provision of Drinking Water and Sanitation is one of the human rights of citizens of a country. Without these, it may not be possible for a nation to sustainably develop. The water crisis in Nigeria and this has resulted in poverty.

National sustainability depends on the followings:

- corruption should be reduced to lowest minimum;
- the political stability of the nation should be ensured;
- literacy campaign of water, sanitation, and hygiene should be mounted both in the rural and urban areas;
- proper monitoring of water projects should be put in place and no fund should be diverted into another project;
- all stakeholders should be alive to their responsibilities;
- there must be proper planning and action implementations of projects.

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