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# Nigeria: Hungry Nation in a Land of Plenty

**Nigeria: głodny naród w krainie obfitości**

## Introduction

The global wealth of nations is regarded as the mainstay of capitalism. The terms “laissez-faire” and “invisible hand” are becoming popular. In the past, the prevailing economic system was that of mercantilism. Precious metals were the economic strength of a country. In this period, European countries were colonising the globe in their struggle to find more gold and silver (Smith, 1776). Today, it is a fact that countries’ real value depends on their production capacity as far as goods and services are concerned. In other words, what is known as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Why are some nations more prosperous than others?

Contrary to many opinions, it is not attributed to climate, geographical location, or culture but to institutions that drive economic parameters. Many historical examples from contemporary and historical examples, ranging from ancient Rome through Tudors to contemporary China, prominent academics Adegmolu and Robinson suggest that investment and prosperity depend on people’s ability to work hard to make money and keep it. The implication is that there should be sound institutions that can guarantee genuine circles of innovation to ensure good economic outcomes, from natural resources and human capital to policies. Understanding this complex web is crucial for formulating strategies to foster development and reduce global inequalities. The role of institutions in fostering development gives us hope and optimism about the potential for change in the fight against global hunger (Adegmolu & Robinson, 2013).

Hunger is not a localised issue but a pressing global concern. The prevalence of undernourishment, a crucial measure of hunger, is a global challenge. Many factors drive it, including poverty, political instability, economic disparities, climate change, and conflicts. This global nature of hunger underscores the urgency and our collective responsibility to address this issue, highlighting that we are all part of a global community working towards a common goal and demanding immediate action from all of us (United Nations [UN], 2017).

Hunger in Nigeria is a local and global problem that demands immediate and concerted attention. Despite its vast agricultural potential and economic status, Nigeria is grappling with significant hunger-related challenges. This research aims to shed light on the factors contributing to this issue and highlight the global relevance of the problem, emphasising the urgency for action.

Nigeria, a country in West Africa, is a paradox. It is rich in natural and human resources but is plagued by hunger and food insecurity. This stark contrast between wealth and hunger is a pressing issue that we will explore, analysing the challenges faced by Nigeria, the root causes of hunger, and the ongoing efforts to combat it.

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, has a projected population of 216.8 million as of 2022, with an almost equal distribution of males and females. This population, despite the challenges it faces, including a significant portion living in poverty, is a testament to the resilience of the Nigerian people. Nigeria also boasts a rich cultural heritage and diverse ethnic groups, with over 521 languages and over 1150 dialects and ethnic groups. The three predominant tribes in Nigeria are Hausa/Fulani in the north, the Igbos in the southeast and the Yorubas in the southwest (Sewakpo, 2018). Nigeria has experienced rapid urbanisation, with a significant portion of the population residing in urban areas such as Lagos, Kano, and Abuja. Despite urban growth, a substantial percentage of the population still lives in rural areas, relying on agriculture for livelihood. Its wealth is not just in its people but also in its vast natural resources, which include oil, natural gas, minerals, and fertile agricultural land, offering a promising future (Chenge & Salifu, 2020).

The goal of this work is to: 1) analyse the concept of national wealth and its implications for economic development, 2) investigate the factors contributing to hunger and food insecurity in Nigeria despite its abundant resources, 3) provide insights and recommendations for addressing the country's wealth inequality and hunger challenges, 4) contribute to the academic understanding of the complex relationship between wealth, poverty, and development in nations.

## 1. Definition of the theory of wealth and its relevance to nations

The theory of wealth, a cornerstone in understanding economic prosperity, refers to the abundance and accumulation of valuable resources, assets, and capital within a society or nation. It encompasses various forms of wealth, including natural resources, human capital, financial assets, and infrastructure, that contribute to a nation's economic prosperity and well-being (Veblen, 1899). The theory of wealth is the medium through which we can explore how these resources are acquired, managed, distributed, and utilised to generate income, promote growth, and improve the standard of living for the population (Piketty, 2014). The theory of wealth is crucial for understanding the economic development of nations. It provides insights into how countries can leverage their resources and assets to stimulate growth, create employment opportunities, and enhance productivity (Smith, 1776).

Nations with a diverse and abundant wealth base are more competitive in the global market. The theory of wealth helps countries identify their competitive advantages and develop strategies to capitalise on them for sustainable growth (Polanyi, 1944). By effectively managing and distributing wealth, nations can address poverty and inequality within their borders. The theory of wealth highlights the importance of equitable resource allocation and social policies to reduce disparities and improve living standards for all citizens. Understanding the theory of wealth is essential for promoting sustainable development practices. Nations must balance economic growth with environmental conservation and social equity to ensure long-term prosperity for current and future generations (Smith, 1776). Policymakers rely on the theory of wealth to design effective economic policies and programs that promote wealth creation, investment, and innovation. By aligning policies with the principles of wealth accumulation, nations can foster a conducive environment for economic progress. The theory of wealth influences international relations and trade dynamics among nations. Countries with valuable resources often engage in diplomatic negotiations and trade agreements to maximise the benefits of their wealth on the global stage (Smith, 1776).

## 2. Wealth and their significance in national development

Natural resources are raw materials or substances essential for economic development. Natural resources like gold, mines, oil, gas, and agricultural land are crucial for industrial production, energy generation, and food security. Nations

rich in natural resources can leverage them for export revenue, foreign exchange earnings, and economic diversification. Sustainably managing natural endowment is a sure way of preserving the environment, biodiversity preservation, and long-term economic sustainability (United Nations Environment Programme [UNEP], 2024). Human capital refers to individuals' skills, knowledge, and abilities contributing to economic productivity. A skilled and educated workforce drives innovation, technological advancement, and productivity growth in key economic sectors. Education, training, and healthcare investments enhance human capital, leading to higher labour force participation, income levels, and economic development. Human capital development is essential for reducing a nation's poverty, inequality, and social disparities (Sari, Cahyadin, Ignasiak-Szulc & Ahmad, 2023). Financial assets include monetary resources, investments, and capital that can be used to generate income. Sound financial systems, including banking, capital markets, and insurance, provide businesses and individuals with liquidity, credit, and investment opportunities. Financial assets facilitate savings, investment, and capital formation, supporting entrepreneurship, infrastructure development, and economic growth. Effective financial management and regulation are critical for maintaining financial stability, reducing risks, and promoting sustainable economic development. Infrastructure assets comprise physical structures and facilities that support economic activities and public services. Well-developed infrastructure, including transportation, energy, communication, and water systems, enhances connectivity, efficiency, and productivity in various sectors. Infrastructure investments stimulate economic growth, create jobs, and attract private sector investments, contributing to national competitiveness and development. Sustainable infrastructure development is essential for improving living standards, promoting urbanisation, and addressing social and environmental challenges (Du, Zhang & Han, 2021).

Technological assets encompass science, research, and innovation advancements that drive progress and competitiveness. Technological innovation fosters productivity gains, efficiency improvements, and market competitiveness in information technology, biotechnology, and manufacturing industries. Research and development, digital infrastructure, and technology transfer investments enhance national innovation capacity, entrepreneurship, and economic diversification. Technological advancements drive economic transformation, job creation, and sustainable development in the digital age (Omri, 2020). Cultural and social assets include traditions, values, social cohesion, and community networks contributing to a nation's social fabric and identity. Substantial cultural and social capital promotes cohesion, inclusivity, and resilience, fostering trust, cooperation, and social

well-being. Cultural heritage, arts, and traditions enrich national identity, promote tourism, and generate cultural and creative industries contributing to economic growth. Social capital, including social networks, community organisations, and trust, enhances social capital, mobility, and collective action to curb societal challenges and enhance lasting development (Prince, 2024).

The types of wealth mentioned above are essential drivers of economic growth, job creation, and income generation in a nation. Investments in human capital, infrastructure, and social capital contribute to improved living standards, health outcomes, and social well-being. Managing natural endowment sustainably and infrastructural improvement is crucial for environmental conservation and climate resilience. Technological innovation and financial assets enhance national competitiveness, productivity, and market positioning in the global economy. Promoting equitable access to wealth, resources, and assets ensures inclusive development, poverty reduction, and social equity within a nation.

### 3. Nigeria's resource abundance

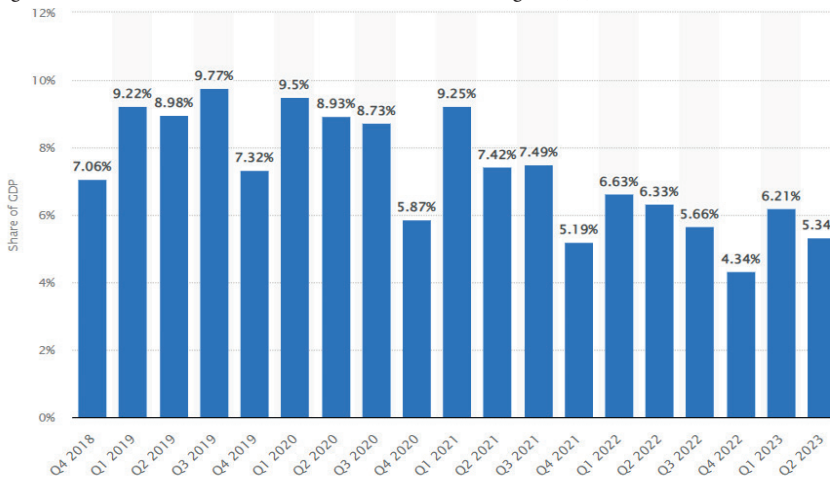
Nigeria has abundant natural resources, including oil, natural gas, minerals (such as coal, tin, and iron ore), agricultural land, and water.

#### 3.1. Oil and gas

Since Shell Darcy discovered the Oloibiri Oilfield on Sunday, 15 January 1956, in Nigeria, it has dominated its economy (Chenge & Salifu, 2020). Oil in Nigeria forms over 90% of its exports, 25% of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), equivalent to 6.33% directly or indirectly reliant upon the crude oil trade, and 80% of its government's total revenues. According to the latest report of EIA 2024, Nigeria is one of the biggest hydrocarbon producers in Africa, and its production is the mainstay of the country's economy. Oil and natural gas are the major and primary sources of foreign exchange, and crude oil price changes affect the economy noticeably.

Nigeria holds the largest gas reserve in Africa. As of the June 2022 Statistical Review of World Energy, BP's report placed Nigeria sixth among the countries that export liquefied natural gas (LNG) globally in 2021. The report also stated that Nigeria had 37.1 billion barrels of crude oil reserves at the start of 2023. The production of this oil is primarily light, low-sulfur crude oil and is mainly exported to the global markets (U. S. Energy Information Administration [US EIA], 2024).

Figure 1. The contribution of the oil sector to the GDP in Nigeria (%)



Source: own study based on data from the Nigeria's National Bureau Statistics, 2022a.

The oil sector generated 5.48% of Nigeria's total GDP in the third quarter of 2023 (Figure 1) from the percentage recorded in the corresponding period of 2022 to the preceding quarter, where it generated 5.66% and 5.34%, respectively. However, the over-reliance on oil has led to neglect of other sectors, such as agriculture, contributing to food insecurity (Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2022a).

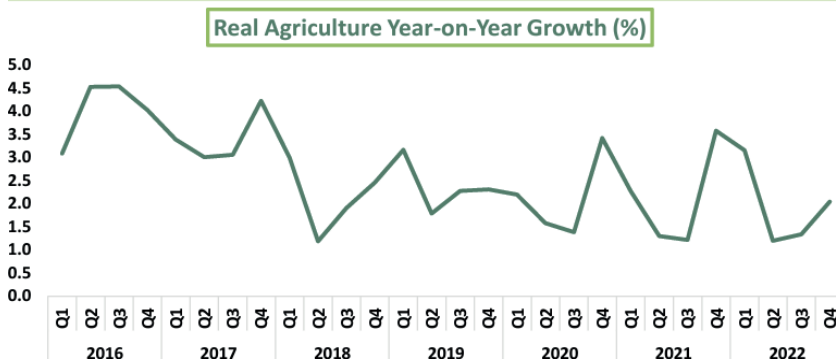
### 3.2. Agriculture

The agricultural sector is also vital, with Nigeria being a major producer of crops like cocoa, palm oil, and cassava. Agriculture is a vital economic sector that employs a large proportion of the population. The country has fertile land suitable for cultivating various crops, yet agricultural practices are often outdated, leading to low productivity and food shortages. Lack of improved seedlings, fertilisers, access to finance, as well as outdated agriculture methods, such as hoes and cutlasses, reduce efficiency as these methods are costly and time-consuming. Nigeria's failure to adopt advanced mechanised systems has reduced the quality of its agricultural products. The employment rates below show the Agricultural sector as the largest employer in Nigeria (Oseni & Winters, 2009).

Four sub-activities comprise the Agricultural sector (Figure 2): Crop Production, Livestock, Forestry and Fishing. The sector recorded significant growth of 18.67% year to year in nominal terms in the fourth quarter of 2022,

demonstrating an increase of 5.81% from the same quarter of 2021. Looking at the past quarter's growth rate of 20.07%, there was a decrease of 1.40% points. Crop Production remains the primary driver of this sector as it accounts for 91.58% of the whole nominal value of the sector in the fourth quarter of 2022. Based on quarter-to-quarter, the growth was 1.81% in the fourth quarter of 2022. Agriculture contributed 24.90% to the GDP nominally in the fourth quarter of 2022, more than the rate in the fourth quarter of 2021 and also falling short of that in the third quarter of 2022, which stood at 24.17% and 27.55%, respectively. Overall, in real terms, the sector recorded a contribution of 24.05% in 2022.

Figure 2. Real agriculture year-on-year growth (%)



Source: own study based on data from the Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics: NBS, 2022b.

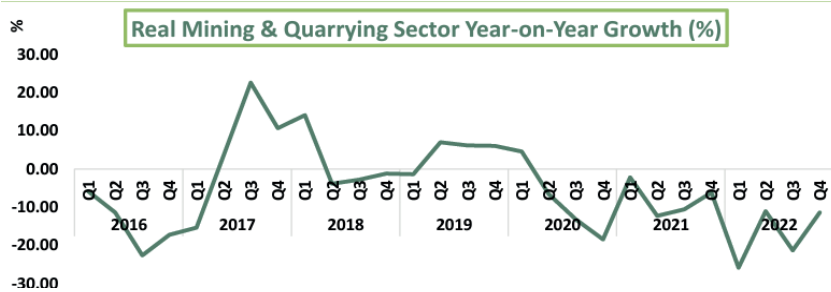
Agriculture had a significant growth of 2.05% year to year in the fourth quarter of 2022 in real terms, a fall of 1.53% points from the corresponding period of 2021 and a growth of 0.71% points from the past quarter, which had a growth of 1.34%. It experiences growth every quarter at 1.01%. In 2022, the sector's growth rate was 1.88%, lower than the recorded 2.13% in 2021. The sector contributed 26.46% to the whole GDP in the fourth quarter of 2022 in real terms, a fall compared to the rate recorded in the fourth quarter of 2022 and lower than the third quarter of 2022, which was at 26.84% and 29.67%, respectively. This sector contributed 25.58% in 2022 (NBS, 2022b).

### 3.3. Minerals

The mineral sector comprises crude petroleum and natural gas, coal mining, metal ore and quarrying and other minerals. There was a nominal growth of 1.07% (year-on-year) in the fourth quarter of 2022 (Figure 3). The other minerals demonstrated the most significant growth rate of all the sub-activities at 47.85%, and metal ore

activity was next at 22.72%. Nevertheless, Crude Petroleum and Natural gas contribute more to the sector, weighing 65.88% in the fourth quarter of 2022. Comparing the fourth quarter of 2022's growth rate relative to the fourth quarter of 2021 and third quarter of 2022 growth rates, there was a decline of 9.72% points and a fall of 35.34% points, respectively. The sector's annual growth stood at 27.11%, higher than the 1.05% recorded in 2021. The Mining and quarrying sector contributed 4.51% to the overall GDP in the fourth quarter of 2022, lower than the contributions recorded in 2021 fourth quarter at 5.25% and lower than the previous quarter recorded at 7.32%. The sector's total contribution in nominal terms in 2022 was 6.85%. The mining and quarrying sector grew significantly by 11.39% (year-on-year) in the fourth quarter of 2022. Compared to the same quarter of 2021 and the third quarter of 2022, it was lower by 5.23% points and higher by 9.92% points, respectively. Quarter-to-quarter, there was a growth of 11.42%. The 2022 growth rate of the sector stood at 18.16%, lower than the 7.79% recorded in 2021. The contribution of this sector to the GDP in real terms stood at 4.71% in the quarter under review, lower than the rate of 5.50% recorded in the corresponding quarter of 2021 and lower than the 5.90% recorded in the third quarter of 2022. The annual total contribution of the sector in real terms in 2022 was 5.88%, lower than the 7.41% reported in 2021 (NBS, 2022b).

Figure 3. Real mining & quarrying sector year-on-year growth (%)



Source: own study based on data from the Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics: NBS, 2022b.

## 4. Human resources

### 4.1. Population

The capacity of human resources highly influences the potential of any country. Nigeria is the largest African country in terms of population, yet this abundance of human resources has not yielded the much-needed economic growth.



The economic growth rate is still as low as 0.1% as in 1995 and 1996. Reports of various statistics suggest the interactions between demographic trends and the state of the economy in Nigeria. Nigeria's high fertility rate of 5.9 per woman and a young population (45% below 15 years old) has been responsible for the consistently high population growth of 2.38% per year and a slow economic growth rate (Ogunleye-Adetona, 2010).

#### 4.2. Education

Education plays a crucial role in addressing hunger and poverty in Nigeria. Investing in quality education can empower individuals, improve agricultural practices, and create opportunities for economic growth. However, the educational situation in Nigeria is pathetic. The latest report by UNICEF (2022) has it that 1 out of 3 children are out of school (OOS) in Nigeria: It shows 10.2 million at the primary level, 8.1 million at the Junior Secondary school (JSS) level, and 12.4 million children never attended school, and 5.9 million left school early. According to UNICEF, Nigeria's OOS population accounts for 15% of the global population. As an insider, I firmly believe that out-of-school children are up to 15 million, and almost 95% of this number is from the northern part of the country.

#### 4.3. Workforce

Nigeria has a large workforce with diverse skills and talents. However, reports show that the unemployment rate was 5 per cent in the third quarter of 2023, representing a third consecutive increase since the first quarter of 2023. On the other hand, the underemployment rate rose from 11.8 per cent in the 2023 second quarter (Q2) to 12.3% in the 2023 third quarter (Q3). Statistics also showed some disparity across settlement types (urban and rural). This brings Nigeria's misery index – unemployment and inflation rates – to 26.5% as of 2023 third quarter (Q3). Nigeria has one of the world's highest misery indexes, with many Nigerians leading a miserable life as purchasing power weakens due to high inflation, pushing many people into poverty.

### 5. Economic potentials

Nigeria's resource abundance has the potential to generate substantial revenue through exports, royalties, and taxes, providing the government with an income

source. Exporting oil and other resources contributes to foreign exchange reserves, stabilising the currency and supporting imports. Resource wealth can fund infrastructure projects, such as roads, ports, and energy facilities, improving connectivity and supporting economic activities. The extractive industries and agriculture sectors create employment opportunities, reducing poverty and increasing economic diversification.

## 6. Challenges

### 6.1. Corruption

Corruption is one of Nigeria's most significant challenges. Mismanagement of resources, embezzlement of funds, and lack of transparency have hindered the country's development and contributed to widespread poverty (Adamaagashi, C. Awakessien & S. Awakessien, 2024). Some of the recent cases of corruption are that of Abdulrasheed Maina, the Pension Reform Task Team's Chairman, who allegedly looted 195 billion Naira (over \$137 million); five people, including a former Director of Police Pension Fund, Dangabar were accused of misusing 32.8 billion Naira (over \$23 million) from the Police Pension Fund, the immediate past governor of Kogi state, Yahaya Bello is alleged to have stolen N80.2 billion (over \$56 million). These are a few cases among many (Centre for Journalism and Innovation and Development [CJID], 2024). In the 2022 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) Nigeria scored 24 out of 100, indicating a perception of high levels of corruption. This score placed Nigeria at 150 out of the 180 ranked countries. This positioning reflects ongoing challenges with corruption despite various efforts by the government and civil society organisations to address the issue (CPI, 2021).

### 6.2. Poverty

Poverty, a pervasive issue in Nigeria, has a profound impact on the country's food security. A significant proportion of the population lives below the poverty line for basic needs such as food, clean water and healthcare. According to Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics, the latest report reveals that 63% of the population (133 million people) are multidimensionally poor. The National MPI rate is 0.257, showing that poor people in Nigeria are unable to provide for one of their basic needs. Regionally, 65% of the poor population (86 million) live in the Northern region, while 35% (nearly 47 million) live in the Southern region. Poverty levels

vary significantly across states. It is as low as 27% in Ondo state in the south region compared to a high Sokoto state, which has 91% in the northern region. Over half of the population is poor and uses dung, wood and charcoal to cook instead of cleaner energy. The people are experiencing a lack of healthcare, food, and housing. Monetary poverty is minimal compared to the many dimensions of poverty across most of the states. The National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) report in 2018/19 showed that 40.1% of Nigeria's population is below the poverty line, and 63% are diversely poor, according to the National MPI report 2022. The diversity of poverty is higher in the rural areas, with 72% compared to 42% in the urban cities (NBS, 2022b).

### 6.3. Inequality

Income inequality is a significant issue in Nigeria, with a small percentage of the population holding disproportionate wealth. These are mainly the political class, who enrich themselves with taxpayers' money. This disparity has led to social unrest and has further marginalised the poor and vulnerable populations. Nigeria is among the countries with high income inequality globally. According to the World Bank and other economic reviews, the Gini coefficient, a measure of income distribution inequality, has been reported to range significantly, indicating severe income disparity. The wealthiest 10% of Nigerians earn times more than the poorest 10%, highlighting a vast gap between the wealthy and the poor (World Bank, 2022). Using the Gini index, the average measure of income inequality for the past five years is approximately 0.49. Contextually, the wealthiest person in Nigeria can earn 8,000 times more in one day than what the poorest 10% of Nigerians typically spend on consumption in an entire year. The analysis by income quintile on the nation's income showed that in 2018, the poorest 20% of the population shared 7% of the total national income in sharp difference to the top 20% that commands 42% of the income share (World Bank, 2019). Despite being rich in natural resources, particularly oil, over 40% of the population is poor (NBS, 2022b). Millions of people live on less than \$1.90 a day.

Regional economic inequalities in Nigeria are highly pronounced. The northern regions of Nigeria are generally poorer than the South. For instance, states in the Northwest and Northeast have higher poverty rates than those in the South and Southwest. The factors associated with poverty in the north are associated with illiteracy, people's attitude to economic prosperity, corruption, bad governance, child destitution (Almajiranci, that is, street begging), ethnic clashes and poor economic roadmap (Daily Trust, 2019). Educational and healthcare access

also varies significantly between regions, with the northern part of the country experiencing lower literacy rates and higher incidences of preventable diseases, as seen in the survey reports under poverty.

Educational attainment is another area of significant inequality. UNESCO reports (2024) show disparities in primary school enrolment and literacy rates between different socio-economic groups, with many children in rural areas lacking primary education. According to UNESCO, students in Nigeria score 309 on a harmonised test score scale where 625 indicates higher levels and 300 represents minimum attainment. This benchmark corresponds to the advanced achievement standard, especially in the International Mathematics and Science Study set. It is imperative to improve the quality of the education provided in schools. The primary school completion rate was 59% in 2020 for boys and 51% for girls. The secondary completion rate is lower, with boys at 42% and girls at 36%. Enrolment in tertiary institutions was 14% for men in 2018 versus 10% for women (UNESCO, 2024). Unemployment rates also vary significantly, with youth unemployment being exceptionally high, exacerbating economic disparities.

According to the UN report on women in the African region, Out of the 206 million population of Nigeria, women make up about 49.95%. 1 out of 3 women from the age of 15 to 49 experience physical or sexual violence almost daily. Women face other forms of gender-based violence, including female mutilation, in many parts of Nigerian society due to deeply entrenched cultural and religious beliefs (UN, 2023). Nigeria has never had a woman president or vice president, and yet females are the highest in number among the electorate. Despite all the efforts made by women to contribute to Nigeria's politics and decision-making, they have continued to record low representation at all levels of governance. In the just concluded 2023 general election, women's representation in the National Parliament is 4.4%, with only 8 women among the 46 appointed Ministers. In the same year, there were only 4 women out of 109 members in the Senate and 16 out of the 360 members in the House of Representatives (UN, 2023). Gender disparities also persist, with women and girls experiencing lower access to education and economic opportunities. According to various reports, including those from the UN and other international organisations, Nigerian women are less likely than men to receive formal education. They are more likely to be employed in lower-paying, less secure forms of work.

There is significant inequality in access to healthcare between urban and rural areas and between the rich and the poor. Healthcare has been highlighted during health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 6.4. Insecurity

Nigeria is not at war in the real sense of the word. However, the massacres resulting from various forms of insecurity qualify it to be regarded as conflict-ridden and at war. Conventionally, the onset requires at least 1,000 battle deaths before it is regarded as a civil war (Dupuy & Rustad, 2018). Islam and Christianity are the two most popular religions in Nigeria. The seeming agenda of the Fulani to Islamise Nigeria has been a serious source of insecurity in Nigeria. This suspicion has destroyed the political and governance trust in Nigeria. The narrative seems to be founded on the Jihad of 1804 embarked on by a Fulani Man called Usman Dan Fodio, who wanted to conquer Nigeria in the name of Islam. These and other conflicts among groups across Nigeria continue to be on the rise. Nigeria has consistently been recording deaths in thousands in various conflicts perpetrated by different groups for decades. The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) put the estimated figure of deaths by the Boko Haram terrorist group at 34,260 and 37,535 people between 2011 and 2018 (Campbell & Harwood, 2018). Apart from the Boko Haram insurgency, there are other sources of violent deaths, which include inter-community conflicts, herdsmen farmers' conflicts, clashes between the security agencies and socio-cultural or religious group conflicts, and other criminal activities, especially kidnappings for ransom. There were about 10,665 cases of both injuries or deaths resulting from various forms of violence, with the highest coming from criminal activities in 2018 alone, recording about 3,430 deaths in 1,190 cases (Ukoji, Ayodokun & Eze, 2019). In the same vein, Boko Haram's deadly activities in the north and the menace of Fulani herdsmen continue to have serious implications for food security. The inhumane tradition of the Fulani herdsmen has often pitted them against vicinity farmers as a result of destroying their farms. In the past, mainly before 1999, these conflicts were well managed among the herdsmen and farmers, and they never extended to the level of recording fatalities. However, when Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999, the conflicts between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers gradually took new forms, and the occurrence, complexity, and killings as a result of the traditional dispute mechanisms became inadequately maintained. Due to their activities, the Institute for Economics and Peace proscribed the Fulani herdsmen as the fourth deadliest group in the global terrorism index in 2014 after killing 1,229 people (Institute for Economics and Peace [IEP], 2018).

Fulani herdsmen have continued to be deadly toward other indigenous tribes since 2014. They are responsible for the majority of attacks, especially demanding

ransom for abductions and militia expeditions against farming communities. The herders continue to be emboldened in their level of attacks because they seem to have sympathisers and sponsors in the Nigerian government despite the classification of these herdsmen as terrorists by the international community. The sponsorship and support of these herders by Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore, Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria and support of the Fulani Nationality Movement, as well as the silent support from the immediate past Nigerian President, Muhammadu Buhari, has encouraged these herdsmen to continue on their rampage of mayhem against the indigenous tribes (Ilesanmi & Odefadehan, 2022). Despite calls by Nigerians that the Presidency is protecting the herdsmen killers and those sponsoring them, nothing has been done to curtail the activities of these herdsmen (International Crisis Group, 2017; Amnesty International, 2018). The courage of the Fulani herdsmen could be seen in the type of hard weapons at their disposal. Before, they only carried and relied on weapons like long clubs, machetes, bows and arrows. But now, they go around with the Soviet assault rifle, Avtomat Kalashnikova (AK47). Recently, it was identified that more than 10,000 people have lost their lives in the past decade due to the terrors unleashed by Fulani herdsmen on the farming communities. Also, more than 6,000 people were found to have been injured or dead in the past two years (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018).

The Fulani herdsmen have also contributed a major threat to food production in Nigeria through their violent harassment of farmers, especially in states like Benue, Gombe, and Taraba. The Fulani herdsmen attacked farmers in the communities in Taraba State and killed about 732 people within four days in June 2017. The Institute for Economics and Peace named them as terrorists. This is due to their engagement in violence, killings, and unrest. These herdsmen do not only invade and destroy farms and farm produce; they intentionally allow their cows to graze on crops that farmers have worked hard to cultivate. This resource-driven conflict between farmers and herdsmen has also decreased access to land for food production, contributing greatly to agricultural food loss in Nigeria.

## 6.5. Climate change

Nigeria has been identified as one of the sub-Saharan African states that are vulnerable to changing climatic conditions (Ughaelu, 2017). Climate change has contributed to the low food quality and nutritional composition of food crops, exposing people to harmful products and causing permanent health issues. The changes in environmental conditions brought about by climate change affect

the six vegetative zones of Nigeria differently (Ughaelu, 2017). This has led to the alteration of planting and harvesting seasons, a crucial aspect of agricultural practices, and a decrease in crop yield, increased pests, influence on livestock, flooding of farmlands and high demands for irrigation. In 2012, severe flooding that had not been recorded in the country in the past four decades occurred in many parts of Nigeria, leading to heavy losses in human lives, crops and livestock as well as human displacement (Ogbuchi, 2020). The reason for the food security and human security crises currently faced in Nigeria is not far-fetched; climate has been identified by researchers as the subtle causative factor for these (Onyeneke, Amadi, Iheanacho, Uwazie & Enyoghasim, 2020). The persistent fall of rainfall gradients in parts of northern Nigeria has increasingly rendered the affected areas unfit for crop and animal production due to the use of natural resources (Wossen, Berger, Haile & Troost, 2018). Also, persistent flooding of coastlines and the southernmost part of Nigeria has led to crop damage, loss of soil fertility, soil toxicity and disruption of the soil ecosystem (Wossen et al., 2018). Some international economic and financial organisations have warned that climate remains a threat to sustainable food production in Nigeria (World Bank, 2016a; 2016b; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2017).

Many research findings point to the fact that the climatic vagaries brought about by climate change have adverse effects on agricultural productivity in Nigeria, leading to lowered productive outputs. This situation has led to shortfalls and disruptions in food and has brought about hikes in food prices. The era of food insecurity has intensified across Nigeria as a result of climatic factors which have limited agricultural productivity. Climate change-induced alterations such as droughts, heavy precipitation, flooding of farmlands, rising temperature, increasing aridity and soil acidity, changes in relative humidity, and increased evaporation, among others, have adverse effects on agricultural productivity and food systems in Nigeria. Climate change has become an everyday reality in Nigeria, with growing intensity and resulting in the increasing frequency of environmental issues such as floods, droughts, rising temperatures, and extreme weather events, which disrupt agricultural productive activities (Adishi & Olu-ka, 2018). The livelihood of some 15 million pastoralists in northern Nigeria is threatened by decreasing access to water and pasture shortages linked to climate change (Onuoha & Ezirim, 2010). Climate variability and extremes will continue to pose a greater challenge to food stability. It has been stated that persistent food price rises experienced in part of Nigeria would make basic food unaffordable to low-income earners (Ayo, Omosebi & Sulieman, 2014). Increased aridity in the Sahel and Sudan savannah regions has rendered large areas of land useless

for agricultural productivity, resulting in a food security crisis in the affected areas, which are densely populated. What is more, the number of malnourished children in Nigeria is expected to be on a steady rise as a result of threats posed by climate change (Fasona & Omojola, 2005).

Empirical studies have revealed that higher and varying temperatures and rainfall patterns witnessed in Nigeria within the past decade are gradually shifting the country's usual agricultural production pattern (Ikem, 2018; Wossen et al., 2018). Consistent extreme climate changes such as drought and flood have thrown the agricultural sector's productive system into crisis (Ogbo, Ebele & Ukpere, 2013).

The Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet; 2024) plays a crucial role in monitoring and reporting changes in climatic parameters such as rainfall, temperature, and extreme weather events. Their observations, recorded across various ecological zones in Nigeria, have revealed the adverse effects of these changes on agricultural productivity – Nigerian climatic data from 1914 to 1970, 1971 to 2000, and 2001 to 2011. The findings indicate changes in the onset and cessation of rainfall, which has affected the Nigerian food system pattern (Ethan, 2015). Climate change is a serious growing risk to food security in Nigeria.

These challenges suggest that hunger in Nigeria is primarily caused by a combination of factors, including poverty, conflict, climate change, and inadequate infrastructure. Limited access to nutritious food, lack of clean water, and poor healthcare services also contribute to food insecurity. Hunger has far-reaching consequences on individuals, families, and communities in Nigeria. Some of the health effects of chronic hunger are malnutrition, stunted growth, and increased susceptibility to diseases. Additionally, hunger hinders economic development and perpetuates the cycle of poverty. Nigeria has the worst fatal consequences of malnutrition. Nigeria's child mortality rate is 11.7% above the global average of 3.7%. This is why the global hunger index ranked Nigeria 109<sup>th</sup> out of the 125<sup>th</sup> countries after scoring 28.3% in 2023.

## 7. Efforts and sustainable solutions

The government is making some efforts to address hunger and food insecurity. Initiatives such as the National Food Security Council, the National Social Investment Program, and the Green Alternative Program aim to improve food production, distribution, and access for vulnerable populations. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are vital in providing food aid, nutrition programs, and agricultural support to needy communities. Organisations such as Action



Against Hunger (2021), Oxfam (2021), and Save the Children (2021) work tirelessly to alleviate hunger and improve food security in Nigeria.

Investing in sustainable agricultural practices, modernising farming techniques, and supporting smallholder farmers can enhance food production and ensure food security in Nigeria. Promoting crop diversification, improving irrigation systems, and enhancing market access for farmers are crucial steps towards achieving food sufficiency. Empowering individuals through education and skill development programs can break Nigeria's poverty and hunger cycle. Providing training in agricultural practices, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills can create opportunities for economic growth and food self-sufficiency. Finding a solution to the problem of poverty is essential in combating hunger in Nigeria. Successive governments have tried to implement programmes like Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution, Better Life for Rural Women, and the Family Economic Advancement Programme. The study reveals, among others, that all the poverty alleviation programmes have failed due to inadequate funding, lack of proper coordination and commitments, and poor design and evaluation of programmes. The proper implementation of these programmes is what Nigeria needs to guarantee and uplift the vulnerable population and improve food security.

## Conclusion

Nigeria stands at a critical juncture, grappling with the paradox of being a nation abundant in resources yet plagued by hunger and food insecurity. The intricate interplay of demographic diversity, economic challenges, and pervasive insecurity has created a complex landscape that hinders the country's agricultural potential and economic growth.

The demographic diversity of Nigeria, with its large and youthful population, presents both opportunities and challenges for sustainable development. Harnessing the energy and creativity of the youth, improving access to education and skills training, and promoting inclusive economic policies are essential steps towards building a resilient and prosperous nation.

However, the persistent insecurity in Nigeria, characterised by various forms of violence and conflict, poses a significant threat to agricultural productivity, food security, and overall economic stability. The impact of insecurity on farmers, businesses, and communities reverberates across the economy, hindering growth, investment, and job creation.

A multifaceted approach is needed to address the pressing issue of food insecurity in Nigeria. This includes strengthening security measures to protect farmers and agricultural activities, investing in infrastructure and technology to enhance productivity, and fostering partnerships with international organisations and neighbouring countries to support food access and distribution.

Moving forward, Nigeria must prioritise security, economic diversification, and social welfare to overcome the challenges of hunger and poverty. By implementing effective policies, promoting sustainable agricultural practices, and fostering a conducive business environment Nigeria can unlock its full potential and pave the way for a future where abundance indeed translates into prosperity for all its citizens. The journey towards food security and economic stability in Nigeria requires collective efforts, innovative solutions, and a steadfast commitment to addressing the root causes of hunger and insecurity. With determination and strategic planning, Nigeria can transform its narrative from a hungry nation to a land of plenty for generations. By working together, both the government and civil society can create a future where hunger is no longer a reality in a land of plenty.

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### Summary

Hunger is a pressing global concern. The prevalence of undernourishment, a crucial measure of hunger, is a global challenge. Many factors are responsible including poverty, political instability, economic disparities, climate change, and conflicts. The global nature of hunger underscores the urgency and collective responsibility to address this issue, demanding immediate action from all of us. Often heralded as a land of vast agricultural potential and rich natural and human resources, Nigeria faces a paradoxical struggle with pervasive hunger and food insecurity. This article explores Nigeria's multifaceted hunger crisis despite its capacity to be a leading food producer in Africa. We examine the socio-economic and political dynamics that contribute to this disparity, including issues such as land distribution inequities and the impact of oil dependency. Additionally, the article analyses the role of government policies and infrastructure deficits. The goal of this work is to 1) analyse the concept of national wealth and its implications for economic development, 2) investigate the factors contributing to hunger and food insecurity in Nigeria despite its abundant resources, 3) provide insights and recommendations for addressing the country's wealth inequality and hunger challenges, and 4) contribute to the academic understanding of the complex relationship between wealth, poverty, and development in nations.

**KEYWORDS:** global wealth, natural and human resources, Nigeria, hunger

### Streszczenie

Głód jest palącym problemem o wymiarze globalnym. Częstość występowania niedożywienia, kluczowej miary głodu, jest globalnym wyzwaniem. Wiele czynników, takich jak: ubóstwo, niestabilność polityczna, dysproporcje gospodarcze, zmiany klimatyczne i konflikty, wpływa na ten stan rzeczy. Globalny charakter głodu wskazuje na pilną potrzebę i zbiorową odpowiedzialność za rozwiązanie tej kwestii, wymagając od nas wszystkich natychmiastowych działań. Nigeria, często uważana za kraj o ogromnym potencjale rolniczym i bogatych zasobach naturalnych i ludzkich, stoi w obliczu paradoksalnej walki z wszechobecnym głodem i brakiem bezpieczeństwa żywnościowego. Niniejszy artykuł analizuje wieloaspektowy kryzys głodu w Nigerii istniejący pomimo jej potencjału do bycia wiodącym producentem żywności w Afryce. Przedmiotem analizy jest dynamika społeczno-gospodarcza i polityczna, która przyczynia się do tej rozbieżności, w tym kwestie takie jak nierówności w podziale gruntów i wpływ uzależnienia od ropy naftowej. Ponadto w artykule została omówiona rola polityki rządowej i deficytów infrastrukturalnych. Celem niniejszej pracy jest: 1) analiza koncepcji bogactwa narodowego i jego implikacji dla rozwoju gospodarczego, 2) zbadanie

czynników przyczyniających się do głodu i braku bezpieczeństwa żywnościowego w Nigerii, pomimo jej obfitych zasobów, 3) dostarczenie spostrzeżeń i zaleceń dotyczących rozwiązania nierówności majątkowych w kraju i wyzwań związanych z głodem oraz 4) przyczynienie się do zrozumienia złożonego związku między bogactwem, ubóstwem i rozwojem narodów.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: globalne bogactwo, zasoby naturalne i ludzkie, Nigeria, głód

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