

Patterns of Inequality in Human Development Across Nigeria's Six Geopolitical Zones

Eze, Titus Chinweuba,^{1*} Okpala, Cyril Sunday,² Ogbodo, Joseph Charles.³

- 1 Department of Economics, Caritas University, Amorji-Nike, Emene, Enugu State. Nigerai.
- 2 Department of Economics, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
- 3 Department of Economics, Enugu State University of science & Technology, Enugu, Nigeria.

* E-mail of Corresponding Author: ezetituschinweuba@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper employed the historical research method in analyzing the patterns of inequality in human development across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. The paper indicated that though differences in income among the zones are statistically significant, the differences are not economically substantial to induce unequal human development among the six geopolitical zones. Causes of inequality in human development among the zones may be attributed to other variables such as religion and culture rather than on income or access to infrastructural facilities. It was also deduced that generally, there exist a yawning gap in human development between the Northern zones and the southern zones, with the Northern zones trailing behind the southern zones. The problem of inequality becomes more severe comparing the female gender in the Northern zones with their counterparts in the Southern zones. Nigeria therefore requires to device pro-poor investment and growth policies, and increasing commitment to a broader poverty reduction programmes. Finally, anti-corruption policies should vigorously and sincerely be pursued to ensure that allocations to the target group (the poor) are met.

Keywords: *Human Development, Inequality, Geopolitical, Amalgamation, Gender empowerment, Marginalization*

1. INTRODUCTION

The existence of inequalities among the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria is not debatable. However, there is no clear consensus on the dimension of these inequalities. In his submission, Aka (2000), is of the opinion that claims of inequalities across regions had existed ever since Nigeria's independence. According to the Human Development Report 1994, Regional inequalities in Nigeria were among the worst in the world. When states in Nigeria were ranked by the UNDP in its 1994 Human Development Report, the State of Bendel which had been split up into Edo and Delta States was topmost with an HDI index nearly five times higher than that of Borno State which had an HDI index lower than that of any country in the world. Moreover, inequalities have been associated with Nigeria's failed federalism and a rapid movement to a more central government (Wante Chekon and Asadurian, 2002; Suberu, 2001; and Soyinka, 1977).

Over the years, claims of regional inequalities and marginalization have increased tremendously. Some of the main areas of contention have been inequalities in income, education, social amenities, nutrition, shelter, etc (World Bank Report, 1995). Between 1985 and 2007, inequality among the federating units in Nigeria worsened from 0.43 to 0.49, placing the country among those with the highest inequality levels in the world. The poverty problem in the country is viewed as partly a feature of high levels of inequality which manifests in highly unequal income distribution and differential access to basic infrastructure, education, training and job opportunities. Sustained high overall inequality reflects a widening income gap and access to economic and social opportunities between gender, growing inequalities between and within rural and urban populations, and widening gaps between the federating unit's economies. As demonstrated by Boliar (2010), the major causes of Nigeria's poverty go beyond low incomes, savings, and growth, which are usually associated with poor countries to include high levels of inequality attributes, basic infrastructure, poor education and health status among the component units of the country.

2. Historical Antecedents

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa. Based on projections from the 2006 census which put the nation at 140 million, the current population of Nigeria is between 160 to 167 million. According to Adesina (1988), One out of every five Africans is a Nigerian, and also one of the most ethnically fragmented with over 200 ethnic groups and 374 languages. Before the advent of colonial rule, Nigeria was non-existent, and the area mapped out as

Nigeria held several distinct kingdoms each with its unique cultural heritage. Before the British took over in the 19th century, these kingdoms clashed regularly in attempts to assert individual dominance and superiority. After the take-

over of most parts of Africa by the Europeans, the region was divided arbitrarily mainly between the French and the British. Subsequently, the southern Cameroon later joined the Cameroon hence making the British the sole occupant of what later became Nigeria.

Nigeria was thus created as an aggregate of different kingdoms and parts of kingdoms. For administrative convenience, the British divided the country first into two regions (Northern and Southern protectorates), and later amalgamated the two regions to form what is known today as Nigeria. However, the existence of several unique kingdoms within these regions necessitated further divisions as minor groups sought to carve out their own niche amidst clashes and claims of marginalization. Today, there are thirty-six states in Nigeria excluding Abuja the capital, yet the demands for further divisions are still before the National Assembly for consideration.

Consequently, the thirty-six states in Nigeria, for ease of resource sharing, have been politically classified into six geopolitical zones, namely, the North Eastern Zone (NE), the North-Central Zone (NC), the Middle-Belt Zone (MB), the South-East Zone (SE), the South-West Zone (SW), and South-South Zone (SS). It is interesting to note that these zones have not been entirely carved out based on geopolitical location, but rather states with similar cultures, ethnic groups, and common history were classified in the same zone. This explains the reason why regions in Nigeria are geopolitical in nature, as well as evidence of different backgrounds, unique features and unequal human development level.

3. Dimensions of Inequality in Human Development among Nigeria's Six Geopolitical Zones

In discussing inequalities in human development across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria, emphasis will be placed on those variables that determine welfare and the disparities in terms of their availability and level among the zones. These include level of income, educational attainment, availability of health services, etc. According to Mkpa (2000), "these amenities create knowledge, broaden skills, and improve health, which is necessary for sustaining economic growth, rising living standards, and enriching people's lives".

Following the research conducted recently in Nigeria by the "International Research Institute", the following variables are the major determinants of human development levels in the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria:

(a) Education and Occupation: Boliarin (2010), confirms that across the six geopolitical Zones in Nigeria, education improves the welfare of rural households, while households engaged in agricultural activities have lower activities. In his study, there are substantial evidence of geopolitical inequalities in educational attainment, school quality, education expenditure, and school enrolment among the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria.

Given the inequalities in these aspects of education, it is understandable why claims of regional inequalities in the benefits from education exist. Moreover, the role of education has come under scrutiny in some parts of Nigeria over the last twenty years and primary enrolment rates in these zones dropped (FOS, 2011). In the late 1990s, doubts towards education and its benefits were linked partially to claims of the persistence of the uneducated rich especially in the Northern parts of the country and an increase in the educated poor in other zones. Furthermore, the growing opinion that education has little value and the right social network or belong to a certain ethnic group matters more for income determination, only heightened negative attitude towards education in certain zones. For example, in the Eastern parts of Nigeria, this attitude has led to a prevalent problem termed the "boy-child" drop out syndrome. Mkpa (2000), noted that boys, for economic reasons, refuse to go to school and those who enter primary schools drop out prematurely. They refuse to complete primary and secondary education because of the economic problems encountered by the educated in their society. Given this disturbing trend and its consequences, it is important to verify the existence of disparities in benefits from education across regions.

(b) Income Level

Another variable to consider when looking at disparities in human development among the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria is the income disparities. A general belief prior to democracy in Nigeria was that the Northern regions generally were better of income wise than the Southern regions. This representation is based on the political dominance of the North for most of the 1990s (Lewis et al, 1998). However, an empirical work by Uwaifo (2007), disproved this assertion. Using simple t-tests on a pooled data in Nigeria, Uwaifo provides a summary of mean income across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria as shown in the table below:

Table 1: Real Mean Household Income by Zones

ZONES	₦	1996/97 MEAN (SE)	₦	1997/98 MEAN (SE)	₦	1998/99 MEAN (SE)	POOLED MEAN (SE)
NORTH EAST	5011	244.6 (20.7)	5639	92.95 (7.00)	4379	72.65 (1.78)	139.63 (7.74)
NORTH CENTRAL	6003	139.07 (8.3)	6705	79.03 (2.21)	5220	83.04 (3.13)	99.82 (3.22)
MIDDLE BELT	6974	384.15 (19.4)	7291	92.23 (2.2)	5624	102.38 (2.49)	209.28 (7.72)
SOUTH EAST	4884	97.75 (2.14)	5514	94.86 (1.76)	4030	101.44 (2.11)	96.94 (1.11)
SOUTH WEST	6018	117.06 (8.36)	7123	94.20 (1.14)	5712	99.26 (1.28)	100.43 (2.36)
SOUTH SOUTH	5881	100.97 (1.65)	6300	102.37 (5.49)	5277	100.11 (1.98)	101.49 (2.37)

NOTE: Income is in real terms, and currency in naira

SOURCE: National Integrated Survey of Households (NISH) for 2007.

Table 1 above provides a summary of mean income across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria over the three periods of the data set, pooling the data sets together. The result shows that there is evidence of zonal inequality in income in the year 1996/97. However, given the possibility of measurement error in the data set, focus would be placed on the other two data periods, that is, 1997/98 and 1998/99. Interestingly, if we focus solely on these two periods, there is less evidence of significant differences in mean income across most of the zones. The largest disparities in income between two zones are ₦22 in 1997/98 and ₦29 in 1998/99. Though these differences may be statistically significant, the differences are not economically substantial. This result is very surprising given the general perception in income inequalities in Nigeria at this time. This simple analysis seems to indicate that there are no substantial income inequalities across the zones, and hence does not induce unequal human development among the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria.

C. Health Facilities

Using the recent research conducted by the International Food Policy Research Institute on quantity analysis of rural poverty in Nigeria, the following factors are found to be important determinants of rural welfare, hence on human development in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria.

(i) Dwelling Type

It was found that households living in decent accommodations have higher welfare and hence higher human development than those living in huts. According to their discovery, households in the North West, South East, and South- South zones have access to more decent accommodations than households in the North East, South West, and North Central zones. This result could be attributed to the fact that these zones with decent accommodation have more exposure to Western style than those assumed to be living in less decent dwelling places.

ii. Access to Safe Water

Households with access to safe water have higher welfare and human development index than those without safe water in the North Central, North West and South East zones but lower in the South- South zones. Access to safe water does not affect welfare in North East and South West zones.

iii. Access to Safe Toilet

Households with access to safe toilet facilities have higher welfare than those without safe toilets in all the geopolitical zones of Nigeria, except in the North Central where it is lower, and in the North East where it does not affect welfare at all.

iv. Size of Household

Large household size reduces welfare in all the geopolitical zones except in the rural South- South zones, where the size of the household does not influence human development.

v. Gender

Male-headed households were found to have higher welfare than female-headed households in the North Central and South- South zones in rural Nigeria but lower welfare in the North West. Gender does not have any influence on welfare in the North East, South East, and South West zones.

Below is Table 2 showing the summary of human development indices for the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria for 2009 and 2010 respectively.

Table 2: Nigeria's Human Development Summary Statistics by Zones 2009-2010

ZONES	HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX (HDI VALUE)	HUMAN POVERTY INDEX (HPI)	GENDER DEVELOPMENT MEASURE (GDM)	GENDER EMPOWERMENT MEASURE (GEM)	INEQUALITY MEASURE (INQ)
N. CENTRAL	0.490	34.65	0.478	0.244	0.490
N. WEST	0.420	44.15	0.376	0.117	0.440
N. EAST	0.332	48.90	0.250	0.118	0.420
S. WEST	0.523	21.50	0.507	0.285	0.480
S. EAST	0.471	26.07	0.455	0.315	0.380
S. SOUTH	0.573	28.61	0.575	0.251	0.410

SOURCE: MBS and NHDR TEAM 2009 - 2010

As shown by the indicators in the above table, human development has remained unimpressive in Nigeria compared to levels achieved in many other developing countries. Suberu (2001) attributes this to the structure of production and nature of growth. Corroborating with him is Obadina (1999) in his submission that the structure of production and nature of growth account in part, for the limited response of poverty and human development to improved growth performance.

Summary and Conclusion

This is a study on the patterns of inequality in human development across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. Nigeria has been shown to be an aggregate of people of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The differences among the people of Nigeria in terms of culture, ethnicity, languages, and religion exert far-reaching influences on their respective human development and growth.

Human development has remained unimpressive in Nigeria as shown in Tables 1 and 2. This concern about inequality in Nigeria has given rise to a good number of past and ongoing redistribution programmes woven around poverty reduction and women empowerment, yet no improvements have been shown. Analysis of Table 1 indicate that though differences in income among the zones are statistically significant, the differences are not economically substantial to induce unequal human development among the six geopolitical zones. Therefore causes of the inequalities in human development among the zones may be attributed to other variables such as religion and culture rather than on income and access to infrastructural facilities. This is more pronounced in the area of gender inequality where there exists a wide gap between the Northern zones and the southern zones. As a result of restrictions imposed on the female folk in the North due to religion, human development of females in the southern zones far outstrip those of their counterparts in the Northern zones.

Nigeria requires sufficient improvement in the quality of human capital in order to adequately change the composition of economic activities towards higher productivity. This could be done by creating the enabling environment to achieve high levels of investment and growth. The resulting growth has to be pro-poor. To be pro poor requires a focus on ways of increasing opportunities for the poor to participate more fully in the growth process. There should be an increasing commitment on the part of the government to a broader poverty – reduction programmes.

High levels of inequality is a pointer to corruption, absence or failure of redistribution policies, institutional shortcomings in the provision of basic services, as well as many years of mismanagement of public resources. In view of this, the government should improve on the rule of law and transparency in governance. The negative influence arising from corruption manifests in misallocation and mismanagement of scarce resources reduces investment and growth and this negatively affects human development. The government should improve the access and quality of physical infrastructure such as good network of roads, water, communication technology, electricity, etc. These will in no small measure reduce the level of inequality among the different geopolitical zones.

REFERENCES

- Adesina, S. (1988). *The Development of Modern Education in Nigeria*. Heineman Education Books, Ibadan.
- Aka, E. O. (2000). "Regional Disparities in Nigeria's Development: Lessons and Challenges for the Twenty-First Century". *Lanhan, MD: University Press of America* 205 Pp.
- Aluede, R.O.A (2006). "Regional Demands and Contemporary Educational Disparities in Nigeria". *Journal of Social Science*. 13(3): 183-189.
- Fafunwa, B.A. (1974). *History of Education in Nigeria*: London Allen and Unwin (New Edition in 1991).

F.O.S (2000). *Annual Abstract of Statistics*. Abuja: Federal Office of Statistics.

Kosemani, J.M. (1993). "The Ethnic Factor in Educational Disparity in Nigeria. *Bensu Journal of Education*. 3(1) 15-25.

Luca, M. (2009). "Comparative Trends in Ethno-Regional Inequalities in Ghana and Nigeria". Evidence from Demographic and Health Surveys". *CRISE Working paper*. No. 72.

Mkpa, M.A. (2000). "Overview of Educational Development: Pre-colonial to present day". Article available online at <http://www.onlinenigeria.com/link/eduadv.asp>.

Nnoli, O. (1980). *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*. Enugu. Fourth Dimension Publishers.

Obadina, T. (1999). "Nigeria's Economy at the Cross Roads." *Africa Recovery*, 13/1

Soyinka, W. (1997). *The Open Sore of a Continent: A Personal Narrative of Nigeria Crisis*; Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Suberu, R.T. (2001). *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*. Washington: United States Institute for Peace.

Uwaifo, O. (2007). "Disparities in Labour Market Outcomes Across Geopolitical Regions in Nigeria. Facts or Fantasy?" *Georgia Institute of Technology and IZA DP* No. 3082. USA.

Wantchekon, L and T. Asadurian (2002). Transfer dependence and Regional disparities: The Case of Nigeria. *Working Paper* No 152. Stanford, CA: Centre for Research on Economic Development and Policy Reform, Stanford University. <http://scid.stanford.edu/pdf/credpri52.pdf> (accessed Feb. 15, 2009).

AUTHORS BIOGRAPHY

1. Eze, Titus Chinweuba is presently a lecturer in the department of Economics, Nigeria Police Academy, Kano, Nigeria. He is also an Associate Research fellow at African Institute for Applied Economics, Enugu, Nigeria. He was born on 23rd December, 1970 at Enugu state, Nigeria. He obtained his B.Sc (Honours) with Second Class Upper Division in 2006 and an M.Sc degree both in Economics from Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu, Nigeria in 2003. He is currently at an advanced stage for his Ph.D programme at Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria. His research interest is in the area of **Microeconomics and Econometrics**.

Titus contributed to a number of published books and journals among which are: *Introductory Mathematics for Economics I and II; Benefits and Costs of Foreign Direct Investment from Abroad: Evidence from Nigeria*", as well as "*Nigerian Women Agro-Entrepreneurship Development: Issues and Challenges*".

2. Okpala, Cyril Sunday is a lecturer in the Department of Economics, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria, and an Associate Research Fellow, African Institute for Applied Economics, Enugu. He holds a B.Sc (Honours), Second Class Lower division of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1983, and an M.Sc degree from Enugu State University of Science and Technology, 2003. He is currently at the verge of completing his Ph.D programme at Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. He had contributed a number of articles in scholarly journals, and a good number of books. His area of specialization is **mathematical economics and econometrics**.

3. Ogdodo, Joseph Charles is a Lecturer in the Department of Economics, Enugu state University of Science and Technology, Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria. He obtains B.Sc (Second Class Lower Division) and M.Sc. Degrees in Economics from Enugu State University of science and Technology, Enugu, Nigeria in 1998 and 2003 respectively. He is almost through with his Ph.D economics at Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria. His field of study includes **Quantitative economics and Research**.

The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open-Access hosting service and academic event management. The aim of the firm is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the firm can be found on the homepage:
<http://www.iiste.org>

CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

There are more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals hosted under the hosting platform.

Prospective authors of journals can find the submission instruction on the following page: <http://www.iiste.org/journals/> All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Paper version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: <http://www.iiste.org/book/>

Recent conferences: <http://www.iiste.org/conference/>

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

