PUBLIC POLICY AND POVERTY IN AFRICA SUB-SAHARAN

O. Introduction

An empirique body of literature on poverty places Africa in the middle of
debates concerning human rights, economic growth, international solidarity etc.
The latest studies about development highlighted that Africa is at the end in efforts
to reduce poverty. (1) The statistics about poverty in Africa are alarmists. Thirty over
fifty of the poorest countries of the world are located in Africa.

Addressing the effects of the poverty in Africa has become a common key of Public
Policy evaluation in that part of world. An assessment of questions surrounding how to
intervene to stop the increase of that phenomenon may be resume by two main issues.

1. Is the power politic has been able to ensure that the practice of Public Policy had
defined clearly all the strategy of poverty reduction. In other terms, the way that the
African leaders had approached this matter has reflected   the real needs of the continent
? It's a socio-political ground that emerge in this consideration.

2. There is various initiatives from public governments in order to reduce poverty in
Africa in particular. In which ways these interventions matches with the efficient public
policy requirement   ?

Given the growing challenges affecting all the process of poverty reduction in Africa and
the lack of local efficient solutions, it is reasonable to consider all the aspects when its
come to evaluate the impact of Public Policy over poverty reduction strategy.

This article seeks to advance thinking about Public policy responses in Africa in relation
with the main issues of poverty. It explores ways of Africans leader's intervention in
order to provide acceptable life environment to African people. It will begin with a
preliminary review of literature to unpack the key themes and hypotheses of contributions
dealing with the relation between the Public Policy practice and the poverty reduction
strategy . It will apply next the finding from this overview to a case particular of Africa
by highlighting important questions and challenges that must be addressed to better
understand the problematic between two realities: Public Policy and Poverty in Africa

I. CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT PUBLIC POLICY IN AFRICA

This chapter explains the terms and suggest some relevant ideas about public policy
practice in Africa . Public policy is concerned with how issues and problems come to be
defined and constructed and how they are placed on the political and policy agenda. But

it is also the study of "how, why and what effect governments pursue particular courses of action and inaction. (2)

The concept of Public Policy has emerged in the context of responding to a specific social struggle around a number of issues such as inequality, poverty, social justice, basic human rights and obligations, and duties of society and state to ensure the welfare of the citizens.(3)
Following the given signification, my comments are based upon two considerations:

The first consideration is related in scientific or research interest. The domain of public policy was born in controversy, with hardly universal acceptance over the key values, objectives and procedures, except for the broad nation of caring for dependant and vulnerable groups, social rights and entitlement. For a long time, African scholars did not take a keen interest in public policy, especially given its colonial and Western origins. In this context, public policy embodies both policies and the area of studies that confronts issues of human sustenance and well being. It covers a wide range of concerns that encapsulates issues such as health, education, employment, income security, social welfare, nutrition, household food security and women in development.
Generally, public policy processes in Africa are very conservative and restricted, with little public involvement and no input from target population and a wider community. This is a serious omission given that public policy is a powerful tool for understanding and solving social problems.(4)

The second consideration is rooted in political issues. The procedure of defining a political model of society is essential in order to evaluate the African leader's responses in social ground. Based on the recognition that the maintenance of social order is dependent upon more than the economical rules, the political model that
Includes various levels of intervention in the formulation of public policy appears to be the most appropriate in the context of poverty reduction in Africa sub-Saharan.
In this regard, the absence of an established policy framework type in many sub-Saharan African countries is explained by the nature of inherited colonial states and their weaknesses relative to military institutions in Africa, multinational corporations and industrialized Western states (5).

It is clear upon these mentioned considerations that public policy in Africa is an existent institutional practice. The significance of this concept means a lot in the context of fighting issues of society such as poverty. I am going to attempt to situate the phenomenon of public policy in the context of poverty reduction strategy.

II. POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY IN AFRICA

This chapter does not repeat the conceptual considerations elaborated in chapter one. Rather, it uses these as the framework for analysis of the African case.
There is no unanimously accepted definition of poverty. The Human development Report

1997 emphasize two essential features of the concept of poverty (6):
1. Its comparative nature-nationally and internationally and within specific situations of poverty; and
2. its complex and multidimensional nature.
We can considers that poor are those whose level or standard of living is below what the society in which they live deems as a minimum that all its members ought to have.(7)
I am considering Africa sub-Saharan region because of two reasons:
1. The magnitude and the expansion of poverty and the grave threat it poses to social, political and economical stability make it one of the biggest challenges facing Africa at the end of this century and into the next.(8)
2. It has been estimated that between 40 and 45 per cent of the African continent's 793 Million people live in poverty, with about 30 per cent classified as extremely poor, that is living on less than one dollar per day. Among all developing regions, Africa has the largest proportion of people living in absolute poverty, and that proportion has remained virtually unchanged for a decade.(9)

At first glance, it appears that the mechanism of poverty reduction in the Africa context is or must be one of the components of public policy formulation. The implication of public policy in poverty reduction eradication has to be seen as an imperative. In this perpective, Saleh M. Nsouli notes that the mecanism of eradicating poverty can be divided into two broad categories. The first operates by directly affecting the resources that individuals and households command. The second operates indirectly by affecting the economic, political, and social environment in which individual and households function. There are policy interventions in each category.(10)

It is important to recall here that identifying issues, understanding the phenomenon and determining the main causes of poverty form the basis for the design of national poverty reduction strategy. In 2000, some of 20 sub-Saharan African countries-including Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Comoros, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Namibia, Niger, Senegal, South Africa, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe- have drafted or was in the process of designing a national poverty reduction strategy.

The role of public government is crucial while formulating policy about poverty reduction in Africa. There is also the significance of civil society in this process that has to be highlighted here. There is considerable variation in the degree of institutionalization and richness of civil society in different countries, reflecting both historical and cultural factors and the coercive power of the state…. people have more capacity to influence policy implementation than policy formation. (11)

The result of including civil society in policy implementation process is not only a perpetuation of ideological dependence of civil society, but also a psychological dependence that could affect negatively all the efforts of poverty reduction strategy.

III. CONCLUSION

Africa did not achieve the battle of poverty reduction. In spite of some efforts, there continue to be some tasks regarding his public policy formulation.

The first set of tasks concerns institutional requirements of poverty reduction strategy. It is appropriate to recognize here that subtle variations in democratic constitutional design can have systematic and quantifiable effects on national politics, public policies, and long-term national prosperity. (12)

The second set of tasks concerns leadership. The process of poverty reduction requires optimal inclusion of civil society in formulation stage of public policy. In this regard, K.Y. Amoako believes that what Africa needs is nothing less than leadership and democratization...

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