

Mbeki 2009; Ijaiya, 2012; World Bank, 2012; Ijaiya *et al.*, 2015).

Geographically, poverty and inequality in both countries are also linked to differences in agro-climatic condition and endowment of natural resources and biases in government policies. On a general note, the rise in poverty is driven by uneven access to infrastructure, education, health care services, occupational differences, demographic factors such as gender composition of household labour and ethnicity. It is also caused by low quality of public services particularly in education and health in some areas (which further impedes the accumulation of human capital and thus the earnings capacity of the people), low level of social capital which slows the diffusion and adoption of new farm technologies, and thus reduces farmers earning capacity, and the distance from urban centers which inhibits trade, specialisation in production and access to credit facilities (see, Bigman & Fofack, 2000; McCaston & Rewald 2005; Bradshaw 2006; World Bank, 2006; Mbeki 2009; Ijaiya, 2012; World Bank, 2012; Ijaiya, 2013; Ijaiya *et al.*, 2015).

The high rate of poverty notwithstanding, the governments in both countries had over time come up with several measures that were meant to address poverty and all forms of inequality in the countries and the anticipated consequences of the menaces. In the case of Nigeria, some of the measures include, among others: Operation Feed the Nation, the River Basin Development Authorities, the Agricultural Development Programmes, the Agricultural

Credit Guarantee Scheme, the Rural Electrification Scheme and the Green Revolution, the Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures, the National Directorate of Employment, the Better Life Programme, the Peoples' Bank, the Community Banks, the Family Support Programme and the Family Economic Advancement Programme introduced in the 1970s and the 1990s. In the 2000s, programmes, such as, the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) and National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) which was an integral part of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), the Seven-Point Agenda, the Transformation Agenda and the Ten-Point Roadmap of Economic Recovery and Growth Plan were also introduced (Ijaiya, 2013).

In the case of Sri Lanka measures taken include investment in industrialisation near the urban metropolis, investment in mega irrigation projects, introduction of land settlement schemes, investment in rural infrastructure programmes, increased expenditure on health and education, replacement of the old food stamps scheme with the *Janasaviya* (Self-Help) Programme (a targeted income transfer programme aimed to provide consumption support), introduction of a World Bank-funded credit facilities (provided through the *Janasaviya* Trust Fund to help the poor-start microenterprises). Others are the introduction of the Garment Factory Programme located in the rural areas, the introduction of *Samurdhi* (Prosperity) Programme (consisting of a large income transfer component, a series of

pro-poor credit schemes, including the Grameen-type Samurdhi Bank scheme based on group savings and group collateral), and a small rural infrastructure component that replaced the *Janasaviya* Programme (Gunatilaka, Wan & Chatterjee, 2009).

A Ten-year Development Plan (2006-2016) consisting of policies, programmes and projects were also formulated by the Department of National Planning with substantive contributions from line ministries and various stakeholders. The major objective of this plan was to develop regionally dispersed urban growth centers and small and medium sized townships that are integrated with well-serviced rural hinterlands, as well as, with domestic and international markets through provincial and rural access roads, highways, railways, and ports (Department of National Planning, 2006a cited in Gunatilaka, Wan & Chatterjee, 2009).

However, these measures are not without their challenges that include discontinuity in the implementations, budgetary constraints and mismanagement of the funds earmarked for their implement and insecurity as well as conflicts that have engulfed both countries (e.g. the Boko Haram and the Niger Delta crisis in the North Eastern and Southern Nigeria respectively and the *Tamil Tiger* crisis in the Eastern and Northern provinces of Sri Lanka. Equally is the inability of the programmes to reach the intended people that need them because the people were never involved in their design and implementation. In most cases, the programmes/projects are

the distribution of appointments and nominations within parties and governments, to reflect the Federal character (NBS, 2010; NBS, 2012; Knoema, 2018).

The Nigerian government is made up of three arms: executive, legislative and judiciary. The Executive arm is the Presidency and Federal Executive Council. The executive at the national level is made up of a President directly elected and an Executive Council appointed by the President subject to the screening by the Senate. The Legislative branch is the National Assembly, (Senate and House of Representative) administering the laws and laid down rules in relation to policy formulation and execution. The judiciary interprets the laws of Nigeria. At the State level, the Executive Council is made up of the Governor, directly elected and the Commissioners appointed by the Governor subject to the screening of the State House of Assembly. At the Local Government, the head of government is the elected Chairperson assisted by Supervisory Councillors that are also directly elected (NBS, 2010; NBS, 2012).

### *Poverty in Nigeria*

In determining the rate of poverty in Nigeria, the National Bureau of Statistics used the Harmonised Nigeria Living Standard Survey (HNLSS) and adopted the country-adult equivalent and household size (CAEHS). With these techniques the organisation as provided in Tables 1, 2 and 3 arrived at the following poverty and income inequality profile in the country between 1980 and 2010.

east by the Republic of Cameroon. The climate of the country generally falls within the humid tropics, since the country is located close to the equator. The vegetation of the country ranges from mangrove forest on the coast to savannah grass in the far north (NBS, 2010; NBS, 2012; AfDB, 2018; Knoema, 2018).

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and indeed the largest black nation of the world with a population of about 190 million in 2017 (AfDB, 2018; WPR, 2019). Nigeria's population is largely dominated by three ethnic groups (Yoruba, Hausa-Fulani and Igbo). The Yoruba are in the West, the Hausa-Fulani in the North and Igbo in the East. However, there are hundreds of other ethnic groups of a wide-ranging population sizes. Among these are Urhobo, Itsekiri, Bini, Ishan, Isoko, Ijaw, Ukwuani, Idoma, Igala, Igbira, Kanuri, Ibibio, Effik, Ogoni and Oron (NBS, 2010; NBS, 2012; Knoema, 2018).

Nigeria became an independent country on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1960. It became a Republic in 1963. Between 1967 and 1996 several restructuring exercise were conducted to create development across the nation. In 1996, Nigeria became a federation of 36 States comprising a total of 774 Local Government Areas and the Federal Capital Territory, (FCT) Abuja. Nigeria's 36 States have been regrouped into six geopolitical zones (North-Central zone, North-East zone, North-West zone, South-East zone, South-South zone and South-East zone). This arrangement is generally accepted and used by the political class to facilitate the balancing of

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extremely vulnerable to political capture by local elites because of patron-client dependency structures that provide the poor with safety nets in times of individual or community-wide shocks, but which tilt the balance of power in favour of patrons (see Gunatilaka, Wan & Chatterjee, 2009; Ijaiya, 2013; JCS, 2017).

Against this backdrop, this chapter addresses the following questions. What is the state of poverty and inequality in Nigeria and Sri Lanka? Why have the governments of the two countries found it difficult to address these twin problems, despite the numerous measures put in place over time? What alternative measures are required to ameliorate the hardship experienced by the people in the two countries?

The section is an introduction to the paper. Section 2 provides an insight into poverty and inequality in Nigeria. Section 3 also provides an insight into poverty and inequality in Sri Lanka. Section 4 examines poverty and inequality reduction strategies in both Nigeria and Sri Lanka. The concluding remark is contained in the last section.

## **2. Poverty and Inequality in Nigeria**

### ***Geo-Political Structure of Nigeria***

Nigeria is a relatively large country which occupies about 923,773 square kilometres. It lies between 4<sup>o</sup>16'1" and 13<sup>o</sup>53'1" north latitude and between 2<sup>o</sup>40' and 14<sup>o</sup>41' east longitude. Nigeria is bordered in the south by approximately 800 kilometres of the Atlantic Ocean, in the west by the Republic of Benin, in the north by the Republic of Niger and in the

As indicated in Table 1, the incidence of poverty in Nigeria that was 27.2 per cent in 1980 increased to 69.0 per cent in the year 2010. This percentage rate represents in absolute term 112.4 million people out of an estimated population of about 163 million people. Based on the World Bank \$1.9 a day Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) as poverty line 84.8 million persons were estimated to be poor in 2009. The poverty rate has continued to increase by February, 2019 about 91.4 million Nigerians are estimated to be extremely poor (WPC, 2019).

**Table 1: Poverty Profile in Nigeria, 1980–2010**

Year	Poverty Incidence (%)	International Poverty Rate \$1.9 a day PPP (Million)	Estimated Population (Million)	Population in Poverty (Million)
1980	27.2	n.a.	65	17.1
1985	46.3	44.6	75	34.7
1992	42.7	n.a.	91.5	39.2
1996	65.6	70.3	102.3	67.1
2003	n.a.	72.4	n.a.	n.a.
2004	54.4	n.a.	126.3	68.7
2009	n.a.	84.8	n.a.	n.a.
2010	69.0	n.a.	163	112.4
2019	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	91.4

Source: NBS (2012); <sup>a</sup>Knoema, (2018)

Note: n.a. = not available.

The poverty situation in Nigeria also depicts regional variation. As indicated in Table 2, in 2013, the poverty rate was higher in the North-West zone of the country at 78.1 per cent compared with the South-South and South-West zones at 62.0 per cent and 55.5 per cent respectively.

Similarly, Nigeria's rank in the Human Development Index in the year 2017 remained low (0.53), being the 157<sup>th</sup> out of 189 countries as indicated in Table 3.

**Table 2: Poverty Disparity by Geo-Political Zones in Nigeria, 2010 and 2013**

Geo-Political Zone	Absolute Poverty Rate (%) in 2010	Absolute Poverty Rate (%) in 2013
Urban	52.0	38.5
Rural	66.1	68.9
North-Central	59.5	68.0
North-East	69.0	77.5
North-West	70.0	78.1
South-East	58.7	66.5
South-South	55.9	62.0
South-West	49.8	55.5

Source: NBS (2012); NBS (2014)

**Table 3: Human Development Index in Nigeria, 1990–2017**

Year	Life Expectancy at Birth	Expected Years of Schooling	Mean Years of Schooling	GNI Per Capita (2011 PPP\$)	HDI Values
1990	45.9	6.7	n.a.	2,792	n.a.
1995	45.9	7.2	n.a.	2,569	n.a.
2000	46.3	8.0	n.a.	2,451	n.a.
2005	48.2	9.0	5.2	3,669	0.465
2010	50.8	8.4	5.2	4,862	0.484
2015	53.0	10.0	6.0	5,527	0.527
2016	53.4	10.0	6.2	5,326	0.530
2017	53.9	10.0	6.2	5,231	0.532

Source: UNDP (2018a)

Note: n.a. = not available



***Income and Gender inequality in Nigeria***

As indicated in Table 4, income inequality in Nigeria (measured by the Gini coefficient of household expenditure) increased from 0.42 in 2004 to 0.44 in 2010. The zonal disparity also indicated that North-East and South-South had the highest level of income inequality of 0.44 in 2010.

**Table 4: Income Inequality in Nigeria, 2004 and 2010**

National and Zone	2004 (Index)	2010 (Index)
National	0.42	0.44
Rural	0.42	0.43
Urban	0.41	n.a.
<b>Geo-Political Zone</b>		
South-South	0.38	0.43
South-East	0.37	0.44
South-West	0.40	0.40
North-Central	0.44	0.42
North-East	0.41	0.44
North-West	0.40	0.40

Source: NBS (2012)

Note: n.a. = not available

The use of institutional indicators, such as percentage of university enrolment by gender, percentage of teaching staff in tertiary schools by gender, percentage of seats held in National Assembly by gender, percentage of high ranking government administrators by gender, percentage of Federal Ministry, Department and Agencies (MDAs) staff on grade levels 15–17 by gender and percentage of judges in courts by gender also depict the extent of inequality in Nigeria. As indicated in Table 5, there is no aspect of the institutional indicators that did not show that women in Nigeria were not

marginalised over the years. For instance, in 2015, male university enrolment rate was 55.3 per cent to female 44.7 per cent, male in the nation's Senate in the National Assembly was 91.7 per cent to female 8.3 per cent and male judges in the nation's courts was 73.8 per cent to female 26.2 per cent.

Some of the factors that determined poverty and inequality (income and gender disparities) in Nigeria include among others: an unprecedented decline in both economic growth and social development caused by the huge fall in the price of crude oil in the international market [(the key foreign exchange earner of the nation) from US\$109 per barrel in 2008 to US\$37 per barrel in 2015], exchange rate volatility that led to excessive devaluation of the nation's currency (Naira) from ₦125.81 per US\$ in 2008 to ₦192.44 per US\$ in 2015 at official rate, increase in inflation rate from 9 per cent in 2014 to 18.5 per cent in 2016, macroeconomic policy inconsistency, instability and policy reversals, budget contraction, public sector dominance in production of goods and services, weak institutional capacity for economic policy management and coordination, lack of effective coordination among the three tiers of government, increase in security challenges in the North East and the Niger Delta that limited revenues, investment and output in both the real and oil sectors, a huge external debt overhead, deterioration in the state of infrastructural facilities (most especially electricity power supply), bad governance, pervasive rent seeking and corruption (AfDB, 2016a & b; CBN, various issues).

**Table 5: Gender Inequality in Nigeria 2010–2015**

Year	University Enrolment (%)		Teaching Staff in Tertiary Schools (%)		Seats Held in the National Assembly (%)				High Ranking Government Administrators (%)				Federal Staff of MDAs on Grade Level 15–17 (%)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Senate		House of Rep.		Governors		Deputy Governors		Male	Female
					Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		
2010	58.9	41.1	74.6	25.4	-	-	-	-	100	0	86.1	13.9	-	-
2011	57.3	42.7	75.6	24.4	92.7	7.3	93.9	6.1	100	0	91.7	8.3	75.4	24.6
2012	57.4	42.6	74.4	25.6	-	-	-	-	100	0	97.2	2.8	75.2	24.8
2013	56.1	43.9	74.5	25.5	-	-	-	-	100	0	94.4	5.6	74.0	26.0
2014	56.0	44.0	75.1	24.9	-	-	-	-	100	0	97.2	2.8	72.5	27.5
2015	55.3	44.7	73.7	26.3	91.7	8.3	92.8	7.2	100	0	94.4	5.6	72.1	27.9

**Source: NBS (2015)**

### 3. Poverty and Inequality in Sri Lanka

#### *Geo-Political Structure of Sri Lanka*

Sri Lanka, officially known as the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, is an island country located southeast of the Republic of India and North-East of the Maldives. Its current existence is due to the merger of several empires present on the island under European colonial rule (GSL, 2014).

Sri Lanka was known from the beginning of British colonial rule until 1972 as Ceylon. Its recent history has been marred by a thirty-year civil war which decisively ended when the Sri Lankan military defeated the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2009 (Reuters, 2009).

Sri Lanka with a land area of 62,705 Sq. km lies on the Indian Plate, a major tectonic plate that was formerly part of the Indo-Australian Plate. It is in the Indian Ocean southwest of the Bay of Bengal, between latitudes  $5^{\circ}$  and  $10^{\circ}$ N and longitudes  $79^{\circ}$  and  $82^{\circ}$ E. Sri Lanka is separated from the mainland portion of the Indian subcontinent by the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Strait. The island consists mostly of flat to rolling coastal plains, with mountains rising only in the South-Central part. The highest point is Pidurutalagala, reaching 2,524 meters (8,281 ft) above sea level (Edward, 2003; Sri Lanka, n.d.a & b).

As at 2019, Sri Lanka had a population figure of 21.02 million people and a population density of 320.36 persons per square kilometers (WPR, 2019). The island is home to

many cultures, languages and races. The majority of the population is from the *Sinhalese* ethnicity, while a large minority of *Tamils* have also played influential role in the island's history. Christians in both groups are converts, despite keeping the traditional culture. *Moors, Burghers, Malays, Kaffirs,* and the aboriginal *Vedda* are other ethnic groups in Sri Lanka (Brain, 2006; DCS, 2013; Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d).

Sri Lanka is the oldest democracy in Asia. The *Donoughmore* Constitution, drafted by the *Donoughmore* Commission in 1931, enabled general elections with adult universal suffrage (universal adult voting) in the country. The first election under the universal adult franchise, held in June 1931, was for the Ceylon State Council. Sir Don Baron Jayatilaka was elected as leader of the House (Norton, 2001; Parliament of Sri Lanka, n.d).

In 1944, the Soulbury Commission was appointed to draft a new constitution. During that time, struggle for independence was fought on "constitutionalist" lines under the leadership of D. S. Senanayake. The draft Constitution was enacted in the same year, and Senanayake was appointed Prime Minister following the parliamentary election in 1947. The Soulbury Constitution ushered in Dominion status and granted independence to Sri Lanka in 1948 (Russell, 1982; Kanapathipillai, 2009).

Sri Lanka is a republic and a unitary state governed by a semi-presidential system. The legislative capital, Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte, is a suburb of the commercial

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capital and largest city, Colombo (Russell, 1982). For administrative purposes, Sri Lanka is divided into nine provinces and twenty-five districts. The nine provinces are Northern, Central, Western, Eastern, Southern, North Western, North Central, Uva and Sabaragamuwa. The twenty-five districts are Hambantota, Trincomalee, Ampara, Batticaloa, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Vavuniya, Mannar, Jaffna, Colombo, Gampaha, Anuradhapura, Galle, Moneragala, Nuwara Eliya, Kalutara, Polonnaruwa, Kurunegala, Kandy, Matara, Matale, Ratnapura, Badulla, Kegalle, Puttalam (GSL, 2014; DCS, 2015a).

### *Poverty in Sri Lanka*

The most recent data on the situation of poverty in Sri Lanka was that of 2012/13. The changes of poverty status over the survey periods (1990/91 to 2012/13) was based on the official poverty line, which was established in 2004 and updated to allow price changes using Colombo Consumer Price Index (CCPI). Hence, the poverty line was considered as an absolute poverty line and does not vary geographically. The Official Poverty Line (OPL) for 2012/13 was put at Rs.3, 624 (that is real per capita expenditure per month for a person fixed at a specific welfare level with the expenditure of consumption of food and non-food items). The main data source used to calculate the poverty line was the Household Income and Expenditure Survey which was conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics (once in three years). The method used to calculate the Official Poverty Line (OPL) was the Cost of Basic Need (CoBN) method.

Using the Cost of Basic Need (CoBN) method of analysis, the poverty headcount index for 2012/13 was 6.7 per cent that decreased from the value of the index put at 22.7 per cent in 2002. Despite this decline (at the national level), poverty disparities still exist across the provinces and districts. As indicated in Table 6, the poverty headcount in the rural areas was higher than those of urban areas. At district level, the lowest poverty headcount was reported in Colombo, while the highest was reported from Mullaitivu (DCS, 2015a & b).

Similarly, Sri Lanka's rank in Human Development Index in 2017 was valued at 0.770 which put the country in the high human development category, positioning it at 76 out of 189 countries in the world as indicated in Table 7.

**Table 6: Percentage of Poverty Headcount  
in Sri Lanka, 2002 and 2012/13**

National and Districts	2002	2012/13
Sri Lanka	22.7	6.7
Rural	n.a.	7.6
Urban	n.a.	2.1
Hambantota	32.0	4.9
Puttalam	31.0	5.1
Kegalle	32.0	6.7
Badulla	37.0	12.3
Ratnapura	34.0	10.4
Matale	30.0	7.8
Matara	27.0	7.1
Kandy	25.0	6.2
Kurunegala	25.0	6.5
Polonnaruwa	24.0	6.7
Kalutara	20.0	3.1
Nuwara Eliya	23.0	6.6

Labour market segmentation is reflected in the trends of wages of informal sector workers which are skills-related and hindered by institutional barriers to the movement of labour within and between regions. In Sri Lanka, it was observed that many people are pushed into informal employment by greater distance from commercial centers, by lack of access to roads, electricity, schooling, and health facilities and by poverty which limit their investment opportunities (including investment in schooling and health) (Gunatilaka, 2003; Karunatilake & Jayawardena, 2005, cited in Gunatilaka, Wan, & Chatterjee, 2009).

Underserved locations are usually those that are isolated with the consequences of not having access to basic services, such as electricity. Schools in such areas are small, ill equipped, with few teachers and most of the teachers are untrained. The majority of the population has minimal links with communication networks and the outside world, implying lack of information, which is critical for migration or employment opportunities. Regions subjected to armed conflict and natural disasters such as landslides, drought and *Tsunami* are the worst off in terms of geographical comparative advantages, with the crises destroying infrastructure, eroding human capital, creating security crises and plunging more people into poverty (see also de Samarasinghe, 2003; Korf & Silva, 2003; Kanapathipillai, 2009; Srisikandarajah, 2005, cited in Thudugala & de Silva, 2016; Athukorala *et al.*, 2017; JCS, 2017).



which include: location-specific factors, sector-specific factors and specific attributes of individuals and households. Location-specific factors are by extension determined by uneven pattern of development and poverty reduction strategies, labour market segmentation, underserved locations and geographic isolation.

The uneven pattern of development and poverty reduction strategies are reflected in the Western province where poverty reduced much faster than elsewhere because the region had geographically comparative advantages that enabled it to benefit from the macroeconomic liberalisation of 1977. The region had superior endowments of infrastructure facilities such as a port and an international airport, the concentration of human capital resources, electricity and telecommunications services, and proximity to large, diversified markets of consumers and firms. New industrial enterprises were encouraged to locate to the metropolitan hub, people followed jobs and jobs followed people, thereby setting in a virtuous cycle. Increasing urban concentration raised rentals and wage rates in the hub and nearby. However, high transport costs between the Western province and most other regions discouraged new industries from locating very far away from the growth center. Also, high transport costs between the hub and periphery and the high cost of housing in the urban center constrained labour flow from surplus peripheral areas to metropolitan areas. Thus, regional imbalances between the Western province and the rest of Sri Lanka widened over the post-liberalisation period (Skanthakumar, 2014).

National and Districts	2002	2012/13
Moneragala	37.0	20.8
Galle	26.0	9.9
Anuradhapura	20.0	7.6
Gampaha	11.0	2.1
Colombo	6.0	1.4
Jaffna	n.a.	8.3
Mannar	n.a.	20.1
Vavuniya	n.a.	3.4
Mullaitivu	n.a.	28.8
Kilinochchi	n.a.	12.7
Batticaloa	n.a.	19.4
Ampara	n.a.	5.4
Trincomalee	n.a.	9.0

Source: ADB (2015), DCS (2015ab)  
 Note: n.a. = not available

Table 7: Human Development Index in Sri Lanka 1990 – 2017

Year	Life Expectancy at Birth (years)	Expected Years of Schooling	Mean Years of Schooling	GNI Per Capita (2011 PPP\$)	HDI Values
1990	69.5	11.3	8.4	3,587	0.625
1995	69.3	11.9	9.1	4,407	0.650
2000	71.0	12.5	10.0	5,439	0.685
2005	73.9	13.1	10.4	6,398	0.718
2010	74.4	13.6	10.8	8,435	0.745
2015	75.1	13.9	10.9	10,791	0.766
2016	75.3	13.9	10.9	11,118	0.768
2017	75.5	13.9	10.9	11,326	0.770

Source: UNDP (2018b)

**Determinants of Poverty in Sri Lanka**

As observed by Gunatilaka, Wan and Chatterjee (2009) poverty in Sri Lanka is influenced by a number of factors

The sector-specific factors are captured in the agricultural sector which does not afford an adequate living, despite its contribution to rural employment. That the sector had not improved the living standard of the people was because of the slow rate of structural transformation in the economy in general and the sector in particular, the pronounced urban bias and the unintended fallout of government interventions to protect the rural sector. Agricultural research, carried out almost exclusively by public sector organisations, paid little attention to the profitability of rice production. Private sector investment in agricultural research has been hampered by the absence of intellectual property rights protection, and restrictive seed and phyto-sanitary policies. The agricultural extension service is weakened by its devolution to the provincial councils and the reassignment of agricultural extension field workers as *grama niladhari*s, or village administrative officials of the central government. Existing legislation, which promoted equity in land ownership, had the unforeseen effect of fragmenting landholdings, particularly when urban industry failed to take off sufficiently to ease employment pressure on the land (World Bank 2007, cited in Gunatilaka, Wan, & Chatterjee, 2009).

Inadequate funding for operation and maintenance of irrigation systems had also led to the rapid deterioration of canal systems and to poor quality of services. At the same time, agricultural tariffs have been subjected to frequent change, driven by political imperatives to dampen the cost of living. Rural non-farm enterprises that served as complements to farm activities are also constrained by the

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poor quality or absence of transport and electricity,  
to urban hubs, poor access to and high cost of finance,  
limited access and unreliable supply of electricity, marketing  
difficulties, and poor coverage in telecommunications  
(Gunatilaka, Wan, & Chatterjee, 2009).

The education sector is not left out in the challenges faced by the people to getting out of poverty. For instance, the educational system has been based on rote learning, abstraction and authority, which have inculcated attitudes that avoid challenges. This has placed children from poor families at a disadvantage as they lack the means to obtain work-oriented skills from fee-levying institutions. By 2003 nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) of school leavers had not mastered the mother tongue, 90 per cent had not mastered English, and 62 per cent had not mastered mathematics. These skills are essential for higher education and employment (Reinprecht & Weeratunge 2006, cited in Gunatilaka, Wan, & Chatterjee, 2009).

Specific attributes of individuals and households are reflected in the inability of the poor to inherit assets and save income received. In the absence of a social safety net, those who do not have sufficient assets to cope with shocks (such as the death of the principal income earner, illness or disability, loss of employment, natural disasters, or conflict) fall into poverty. Other attributes of individuals and households that are poor are low educational attainment, lack of powerful and widely dispersed social networks and power relationships that determine access to food, shelter,

finance, education or training, employment, and status. In addition, Sri Lankan society is rapidly ageing and poverty is likely to be increasingly associated with old age (World Bank, 2006, cited in Gunatilaka, Wan, & Chatterjee, 2009).

Also associated with the attributes of individuals and households are certain cultural factors such as male dominance, alcoholism, and high tolerance for domestic abuse that make for poverty in some communities in Sri Lanka. Alcoholism is a particular problem in the estates sector where male dominance and geographic isolation prevent women from finding better paid jobs or greater independence. In contrast, in some rural areas where husbands settle in their wives' parental villages, women are more empowered and less vulnerable to male dominance and domestic abuse. They are active members of local self-help organisations and savings and credit groups and have contrived to improve their families' earnings and living standards. In certain urban slums, an environment of violence, alcoholism, and petty criminality traps families in poverty and prevents their emerging from their predicament (Gunatilaka, 2000; World Bank 2007, cited in Gunatilaka, Wan, & Chatterjee, 2009; Kanapathipillai, 2009; Vijayakumar & Olga, 2012).

### *Income and Gender Inequality in Sri Lanka*

Income distribution as indicated by income inequality (measured by Gini coefficient of mean income) has been unequal over time in Sri Lanka with the Gini coefficient for spending units that changed marginally from 0.47 in 2002 to

- creating wealth  
poverty and enhancing value of
- Seven-Point Agenda with the objectives of addressing the nation's critical infrastructure (e.g. power energy, road and rail), food security, wealth creation, transport sector, land reforms, security and human capital development (education and health);
  - Transformation Agenda with the objectives of ensuring greater harmony between fiscal and monetary policy, pursuing sound macroeconomic policies including fiscal prudence supported by appropriate revenue allocation formula in order to achieve a more balanced fiscal federalism, institutionalising the culture of development planning at all levels of government and ensuring that the annual capital budget allocations take a cue from the medium and long-term development plan, implementing a youth employment safety net support programme that includes conditional cash transfer and vocational training, reviewing the university curricula to align with industry job requirements and promotion of apprenticeship/work, enforcing the mandatory sub-contracting and partnering with locals and foreign construction companies, entrenching a culture of accountability by beginning to sanction and prosecute officers that breach established financial management rules and regulations, demonstrating adequate political will to tackle the problem of transparency and

restricted the movement of investors and affected the expansion of industrial and service sector activities outside the Western province which led to the development of an economic enclave, leaving little or no high growth in the periphery. Conflict also promoted the regionalisation of wealth, as well as, concentration of growth to a few selected sectors and industries. The outcome of those developments were also reflected in the regional distribution of income where majority of wealth creation was concentrated in the Western province and the rich in this province getting richer, while the poor in conflict regions reaped little or no benefits from many of those policies of the government (Ratnayake, 2013; Skanthakumar, 2014).

#### **4. Poverty and Inequality Reduction Strategies in Nigeria and Sri Lanka: The Contrast**

Although, Nigeria and Sri Lanka shared the same colonial history, civil conflicts at different times and the nomenclature of developing nations with similar socio-economic features<sup>1</sup> of nations with less per capita income and high rate of income inequality, the poverty rate in Nigeria between 2010 and 2013 was far higher than that of Sri Lanka, despite several measures put in place by the governments of both nations. For instance, the most recent programmes and projects introduced to address poverty and inequality in Nigeria are the:

- National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) in 2004 with the objectives of

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1 for more features.

0.48 in 2013 (DCS, 2015a). These outcomes were reflections of the share of income for the lowest 20 per cent and the highest 20 per cent that were 3.39 per cent and 44.59 per cent respectively in 2010 (DCS, 2015a).

In determining gender specific marginalisation indicators such as percentage of labour force, participation rate by gender, percentage of literacy rate by gender, percentage of women in decision making, percentage of employment by economic activity and unemployment by gender were used. For instance, in 2015, of the total percentage of workers engaged in the labour market, 67.9 per cent were male, while 33.5 were female. Of the total seats held in parliament, only about 4.4 per cent of seats were held by women in 2002 and of the total percentage that were unemployed, 7.8 per cent were female and 3.5 per cent were male (ADB, (2015), DCS, (2015a & b).

It is worthwhile to note that the inequalities (income, gender, etc.) experienced in Sri Lanka over time were manifestations of the liberalisation policy in the mid-1980s, civil conflicts and environmental and social disturbances (same as the reasons of the causes of poverty). For instance, before liberalisation, the distribution of income was even given that the economy then was closed with price controls, quota restrictions and quantity rationing of food benefiting the poor. With liberalisation came the global food and fossil fuel price hikes, global financial meltdown and high domestic inflation rate. The increase in civil conflict and environmental and social disturbances, e.g. *Tsunami*



accountability in the oil industry, aligning the recurrent expenditure with non-oil revenue and devoting a substantial proportion of oil revenue to capital expenditure, limiting total recurrent spending as a percentage of GDP to 6 per cent from the current 8.5 per cent and promoting private sector investments through the creation of an enabling environment.

- Economic Recovery and Growth Plan with the objectives of recognising the inherited debt profile of the nation after a robust audit process, mobilising private capital to complement government spending on infrastructure, strengthening fiscal/monetary handshake, incentivising export, encouraging investment in specific sectors through fiscal incentives, continuous expansion of fiscal space through revenue enhancement and cost consolidation, improving fiscal discipline at sub-national level, enabling and accelerating recoveries process, rebalancing debt profile portfolio by extending maturity and optimising the cost of debt service and catalysing Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) growth through specific measures in order to improve capacity and access to finance (NPC, 2004; Mordi, Englama and Adebuseyi, 2010; NBS, 2010; FGN, 2014; FRN, 2012; World Bank, 2014; FMBNP, 2017).

The introduction of these programmes and projects notwithstanding, the nation is still gripped by the challenges

of reducing poverty. Some of the issues that have to do with inconsistency, duplication of programmes that performed similar functions, bad governance, corruption and fiscal indiscipline, especially among the members of the three arms of government (the executive, the legislature and the judiciary), frequent change of cabinet members, personalisation of office, nepotism, bad attitude, indiscipline, selfishness and greed on the part of leaders and individuals put in positions of responsibility, market and government imperfection in the effective allocation of resources and creation of opportunities, information asymmetric and impaired economic and political institutions needed to drive the programmes (see, Ijaiya, 2000; Ijaiya, 2012; Ijaiya, 2015).

On the other hand, the Sri Lankan efforts at reducing poverty were also remarkable even after going through more than three decades of civil war. As observed by Tennekoon (1986) and CARE (1997) cited in Tudawe (2011), the programmes and projects that made achieving poverty reduction possible in Sri Lanka were classified into three levels; individual/household, community and the state levels. At the individual/household level were cultivation of drought resistance low input crops like millet and sesame, the substitution of rice with coarse grains, reduction in the number of meals and quantity consumed, obtaining credits from informal sources, collection of minor forestry products, sales or mortgaging household assets and/or livestock, seasonal migration to urban areas for wage employment,

consumption of seed paddy kept back for next season's cultivation and utilisation of state-household transfers.

At the community level is historical evidence of village/community support for the poor in time of crisis (such as, a death through Death Donation Societies), long before the formal Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) were developed in the country. With the advent of NGOs most of them often obtain funding from local and foreign donors and use these to provide services to poor people. The types of services provided vary from the social mobilisation of communities for empowerment and communal projects, sanitation and water supply to micro-credit provision.

At the level of the government/state, successive governments have sought to reduce poverty through the provision of free education and health services, targeted grants, employment creation and land redistribution and development. From the 1940s to the 1970s, the emphasis was on state planned and managed approaches with a commitment to universal provision of basic needs and services. The ideas of welfare, poor nutrition, small farmers' productivity, landlessness and equity informed programme design rather than a clear conceptualisation of poverty. The 1970s laid emphasis on poverty reduction through economic growth. The 1980s and 1990s laid emphasis more on 'workfare' types of approach that seeks to permanently raise the income capacity of the poor by raising productivity and promoting self-employment. To achieve this, the government formed partnerships, with NGOs and the private

(see also, Jefferjee & Senanayake, 2014; n.d.), recorded in reducing poverty

The achievements these programmes were not without their inability to notwithstanding, these programmes were not without their others: the inability to challenges that include among others: the inability to most studies by most studies were challenges that include among others: the inability to the most vulnerable by most studies were challenges that include among others: the inability to identify the poor and the most vulnerable by most studies were challenges that include among others: the inability to and analysis conducted then because the studies, were challenges that include among others: the inability to identify the poor and the most vulnerable by most studies were challenges that include among others: the inability to statically based instead of being dynamically processed; the statically based instead of being dynamically processed; the statically based instead of being dynamically processed; the poor were also rarely disaggregated for analysis, thus, statically based instead of being dynamically processed; the poor were also rarely disaggregated for analysis, thus, statically based instead of being dynamically processed; the making information on the magnitude, location and making information on the magnitude, location and making information on the magnitude, location and poor were also rarely disaggregated for analysis, thus, making information on the magnitude, location and poor were also rarely disaggregated for analysis, thus, making information on the magnitude, location and characteristics of transitory and chronic poverty lacking; and characteristics of transitory and chronic poverty lacking; and characteristics of transitory and chronic poverty lacking; and the studies were also not longitudinal which should have the studies were also not longitudinal which should have the studies were also not longitudinal which should have made it possible to capture the dynamics of poverty in terms made it possible to capture the dynamics of poverty in terms made it possible to capture the dynamics of poverty in terms of seasonality, under-nutrition, employment and of seasonality, under-nutrition, employment and of seasonality, under-nutrition, employment and productivity and other spatial or temporal dimensions. The productivity and other spatial or temporal dimensions. The productivity and other spatial or temporal dimensions. The presence of poor targeting mechanism made nearly 50 per presence of poor targeting mechanism made nearly 50 per presence of poor targeting mechanism made nearly 50 per cent of non-poor being recipients of for instance, *Samurdhi* cent of non-poor being recipients of for instance, *Samurdhi* cent of non-poor being recipients of for instance, *Samurdhi* benefits. The presence of political polarisation, war and benefits. The presence of political polarisation, war and benefits. The presence of political polarisation, war and terrorism also made the implementation of strategies for terrorism also made the implementation of strategies for terrorism also made the implementation of strategies for reducing poverty difficult (Gunatilaka, Wan, & Chatterjee, 2009).

With particular reference to political polarisation, war/conflict and terrorism that had existed for more than three decades, Sri Lanka witnessed a simultaneous emergence of ambitious radical youth and ethnic conflict from both *Sinhala* and *Tamil* communities against the established traditional political system of the country, represented by both communities. Four reasons (that had

additional wage employment opportunities at the rural level; and (v) safeguard the poor receiving social welfare assistance (see also, Wickramasinghe, n.d.).

To consolidate on the existing poverty reduction strategies, the government in the year 2000, released a document entitled 'Framework for Poverty Reduction'. The framework which was meant to guide the government and non-state actors including donors had the following policy thrust: (i) creating opportunities for the poor; (ii) providing social protection; (iii) empowering and mobilising the poor; and (v) strengthening governance (see also, Wickramasinghe, n.d.).

To complement the Framework for Poverty Reduction was the introduction of another document entitled 'Public Investments towards Poverty Reduction'. The policy thrust of this document included: (i) modernisation and extension of economic and social infrastructure and services to facilitate economic growth and a qualitative improvement in education and health services; and (ii) provision of refined and targeted social protection and poverty alleviation programmes, rural development and environment protection. In 2002, the government also introduced the National Framework for Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation (The Triple-R framework) to ensure basic needs to those in conflict affected areas; and to rebuild livelihoods and facilitate reconciliation. These documents were further modified and re-titled in 2003 as 'Regaining Sri Lanka: Vision and Strategy for Accelerated Development'

sector, rather than plan, finance and deliver poverty-reduction programmes through the state.

To drive the capacity of the poor to raise productivity and promote self-employment was the introduction of *Janasaviya* in 1989. The programme was considered an outstanding innovative landmark in the reduction of poverty in Sri Lanka. The dual objectives of this programme were to provide short-term income supplementation and long-term employment that would enhance the welfare of the poor. The programme was also introduced to promote human capital development, income generation activity, infrastructure development, provision of low interest credit, improved nutrition and develop small-scale entrepreneurship with a view to increasing the asset base of the poor (see also, Wickramasinghe, n.d.).

To implement the activities of the programme, some NGOs and community groups were selected by the government. The state thus provided funds to cover the administrative and project cost of NGOs and the community groups. With this support, the NGOs and community groups were mobilised to households to launch small-scale enterprises.

*Janasaviya* was further strengthened by the introduction of the *Samurdhi* programme in 1995 which had the following objectives: (i) to expand opportunities for income enhancement and self-employment; (ii) to empower youth, women and other disadvantaged people; (iii) to assist persons to develop their talents and capacities; (iv) to establish and maintain productive assets and to create

link to economic inequality) were established for the conflict. The first was the introduction in 1956 of the Official Language Act (known as the 'Sinhala Only Act') which restricted economic opportunities for *non-Sinhala* speakers. The second was related to education, particularly tertiary admission. When the government in 1971 implemented a system of differential quotas and cut-off marks based on a district quota system to allocate university placements in accordance to local population, the measure resulted in reduction in the numbers and proportions of Tamils entering tertiary institutions. The third was political patronage extended in offering government jobs and other opportunities and services. While this created opportunities for the supporters of two major *Sinhalese* dominant political parties, the *Tamils* were excluded from government and from other opportunities.

The fourth was the grievance among North-eastern *Tamils* for regional development. Most of the state-initiated industrial development took place in and around the capital of Colombo, while the North-East was neglected. The situation was worsened with the commencement of the country's largest development project, the *Mahaweli* Development Project, and other resettlement programmes with the movement of *Sinhalese* people to the traditional Tamil areas. The youth insurrections led by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) in 1971 and 1988 fuelled by the need for a radical reform later led to a civil war that lasted more than three decades (de Samarasinghe, 2003; Korf &

Gafar T. Ijaiya, Mukaila A. Ijaiya &  
Silva, 2003; Srisikandarajah, 2005, cited in Thudugala & de  
Silva, 2016; Athukorala *et al*, 2017; JCS, 2017).

#### 5. Concluding Remark

This chapter examined the state of poverty and inequality (e.g. income and gender) in Nigeria and Sri Lanka, the causes and the consequences of both, and the challenges the two over time in addressing them and the challenges the two nations have had in addressing them.

This chapter found that the two countries shared the same colonial history and the nomenclature of developing nations with similar socio-economic features of nations with low per capita income and high rate of income inequality, especially when compared to countries like Singapore and Malaysia.

The rate of poverty in Nigeria when compared with that of Sri Lanka is high. However, the two countries share similar trends in the increase in the rate of inequality. Reasons linked to this increase are historical, political, socio-cultural, geographical and economical in nature. For instance, economic, political and social distortions/discrimination (that are linked to the system which causes people to have limited opportunities, capabilities and resources with which to achieve income and well-being) led to increase in poverty and inequality. Personalisation of office and rules, nepotism, bad attitude, indiscipline, selfishness and greed on the part of leaders and individuals put in positions of responsibility, market and government imperfection in the efficient allocation of resources, imperfect information and impaired



economic and political institutions led to poverty and inequality.

Political polarisation, war/conflict and terrorism have all contributed to the increase in poverty and inequality in both countries. Instances of war/conflict and terrorism in Nigeria include the civil war that was fought between 1967 and 1970, which devastated the South Eastern region of the country, the Niger Delta crisis that disrupted oil production and affected the nation's revenue drive from oil and the *Boko Haram* crisis in the North Eastern region of the country that affected investment and output in the real sector. The Sri Lankan experiences include the ethnic conflict between the *Sinhala* and *Tamil* communities and the three-decade war that was mostly fought in the North Eastern province of the *Tamil* ethnic group.

Addressing these challenges requires among others, resolving the incessant instability in the nations' key macroeconomic variables, such as, the increase in the nations' exchange rate when compared with those of other countries, e.g. United States of America, high interest and inflation rate, heavy investments in electricity power supply, railway, road and waterways, agriculture, mining and the manufacturing industries.

Allowing greater equity in the distribution of opportunities to the people is imperative if the bulk of the poor is to get out of poverty and if the gap between the rich and the poor is to be bridged. By implication if there exists greater equity, there will be more efficient economic functioning, less

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conflicts and wars, greater economic institutions that would strengthen development.

Fighting corruption, allowing for good governance, making the design and implementation of the policies/programmes/projects meant to address poverty and inequality inclusive, addressing bad attitude, indiscipline, selfishness and greed on the part of leaders and citizens put in positions of responsibility, addressing market and government imperfection in the efficient allocation of resources and creation of opportunities and making the countries conflict free would go a long way in addressing the menace of poverty and inequality in the two countries.

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