# BEYOND DAVID MILLER'S REMEDIAL RESPONSIBILITY: THE RELEVANCE OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY AND WILLINGNESS IN ADDRESSING POVERTY AND HUNGER IN NIGERIA

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## Abstract

*Addressing poverty and its devastating impact on humans is a pressing concern that has been a topic of discussion in both political and economic spheres for decades. Scholars from a variety of disciplines have proposed a variety of strategic ideas to ensure that poverty is mitigated, particularly as it concerns the global South. Clearly, poverty is still a serious problem in contemporary civilizations, particularly in Nigeria. Numerous efforts have been applied to reduce the poverty rate. However, it appears that these efforts have been in futility. David Miller's effort towards the eradication of poverty is explicitly spelt out in his Remedial responsibility theory. Miller highlighted six factors in his connection theory of remedial responsibility. He argued that the six factors weigh equally and no one factor weighs above the other. Through the method of critical analysis, this research submits that capacity weighs more than other factors; this is because if a nation lacks sufficient capacity, then it cannot be held remedially responsible. This research argues further that institutional capacity and willingness is capable of filling the gap that is inherent in Miller's idea of remedial responsibility, thereby helping us to holistically address the problem of poverty in the global South. Although it is true that individuals play a significant role in reducing poverty in the context of global poverty, institutional capacity also plays a larger role than individuals because poverty is a worldwide problem. When issues of greed, corruption, inaction, or lack of drive are raised during the poverty alleviation process, willingness arises.*

**Keywords:** remedial responsibility, capacity, institutional capacity, willingness, poverty

## Introduction

Several facts show that everything and everyone in the world is more interconnected and interdependent than we might have hitherto realized. Some of these facts are, environmental issues like the depletion of the ozone layer, air and water pollution, all of which are attributed to climate change, and then global warming (Mogaji, 2025; Olatade and Mogaji,

2025), which do not respect state borders or any group distinction but affect all peoples alike, irrespective of tribe, nationality, race or age. All these indicates that irrespective of the features distinguishing us, we are still very similar and interconnected with respect to some dangers threatening our continued existence; and the earlier we begin to live in the consciousness of this instead of the consciousness of an illusory 'us' against 'them' dichotomy, the better for us. This explains why advocates of Global Justice believe that we are interconnected irrespective of our region, for one problem in the world should be the problem of others, which resonates with Lorenz (1972) butterfly effect theory of the world being one and interconnected. Hence, this becomes the driving force to recognize the interconnection among people of different races that we need to proffer solution to the problem of poverty because it is a global phenomenon which knows no boundary or color of race. People all over the world, especially in Nigeria migrate for greener pastures in the developed countries and this is because they have the belief that once they go out of Africa then they are out of poverty. Given the rising rates of poverty in the Nigeria, migration has become a viable means of escaping the bonds of poverty.

In proffering solutions to the problem of poverty in the Nigeria, this paper through the lens of Miller proposed the theory of remedial responsibility. The obligation we have to alleviate pain, deprivation and suffering when we are able to do so is known as remedial responsibility. In understanding Miller's Remedial responsibility, he came up with a connection theory. A connection theory of Remedial responsibility considers six factors and its goal is to determine what connections may exist between a nation and those in need elsewhere. These six factors are causal responsibility, moral responsibility, outcome responsibility, benefit, community and capacity. Miller argues that each factor weighs equally and no one factor weighs above the other. However, this paper argues that capacity weighs more than other factors and it play an important role in the assignment of remedial responsibility, which is hinged on nations lacking sufficient capacity, then it cannot be held remedially responsible for putting a bad situation right. Also, in the eradication of poverty, Miller talked about the role of individuals on the one hand and the institution on the other hand. This research argues in favor of institutional capacity because the individual capacity cannot be sufficient alone for the eradication of poverty.

In achieving the proposed goal of this research above, it begins by attempting a conceptual clarification, which has to do with engaging with

discussing the issue of capacity and willingness for global poverty. It then proceeds to the relevance of institutional capacity and willingness to addressing the problem of poverty and underdevelopment. In the third section, the onus of the research will be to proffer solutions to some of the pressing issues of hunger in the Nigeria.

## David Miller's Remedial Responsibility

The idea of remedial responsibility as contained in David Miller's work is a theory necessitated by the challenges of global injustice. He developed this theory as a response to curbing injustices, and in turn ensuring that moral duties are fulfilled toward those suffering from poverty, deprivation, and harm. In his theory of remedial responsibility, Miller emphasizes the obligation to remedy or alleviate an unjust situation, particularly when individuals or institutions are in a position to do so. According to Miller (2007), remedial responsibility is not limited to causal responsibility alone. His connection theory explores the various kinds of relationships or links that may place an agent in a position to remedy injustice that affects others. These connections can be causal, historical, or of other significant kinds. In its framework, the connection theory of remedial responsibility identifies six key factors that determine the nature of the connection between a nation and those in need elsewhere. These factors are causal responsibility, moral responsibility, outcome responsibility, community, benefit, and capacity (Olatade & Mogaji, 2025).

Concerning the six factors listed above, David Miller insisted that these six factors are of equal weight and must also be considered as a driving factor that should be viewed together in determining who should bear remedial responsibilities. Basically, this egalitarian approach of David Miller is actually aimed at preventing any single factor, such as mere causation or mere capacity, from dominating moral responsibility. However, we consider these listed factors not to be of equal weight, considering their role as far as a larger society is concerned. Thus, this paper finds his argument that all six factors are of equal weight faulty, because capacity holds a uniquely decisive role in context. Many (Individuals or Institutions) might have a sense of moral culpability, but may not be equipped with the capacity to act rightly, and thus capacity happens to be the strongest factor of all, but still incomplete without the concept of willingness. This is so because capacity might be there, but what about the willingness to act? One might be morally responsible, one might be the cause, one might even have the capacity, but if not willing, then the responsibility becomes void. In other words, we consider capacity to be the

strongest and weightiest of all the factors, but however still incomplete without the notion of Willingness, thus led to the extension of Miller's framework by including the factor of willingness, which must be paired with capacity. This will be further discussed in the next section as it forms the underlying theoretical framework of our paper.

## The Concept of Capacity and Willingness

The term capacity is an ambiguous word, having different meanings in various contexts or fields of knowledge. Literally, capacity means the ability or power to do something, to perform a particular action, or to handle a specific task. It refers to the potential of an individual to achieve in a particular area. Amidst its different interpretations, its usage and understanding in the context of philosophy for global poverty will be applied for this research. In philosophy, capacity is often used in discussions about freewill, responsibility and agency. The concept of capacity in this sense assumes that individuals have the ability to choose among alternatives and to act freely, and that their choices are based on their own desires, beliefs, and values. Capacity, as a concept, is closely related to the concept of agency, which refers to the ability of an individual to act intentionally and to take responsibility for his actions. Together, capacity and agency are central to many philosophical debates about the nature of human action, morality, and the nature of the self. Thus, it borders on the ontological argument on determinism. In the context of determinism, capacity refers to the ability of an individual or system to make choices or decisions that are not predetermined by prior causes or external factors (Schlosser, 2015).

Since I have given a brief discourse on what capacity is, to grasp a better understanding of what institutional capacity entails, it is pertinent to talk about institutions for a clearer idea of the concept. According to John Rawls, an institution is a public system of rules which defines offices and positions with their rights, duties, powers, and immunities (Rawls, 1999: 47). For this kind of broad definition, legal systems, social systems and cultural practices are all types of institutions. However, it is hard to see how, on the Rawlsian account, institutions can have the agency necessary to hold responsibility. This is because, a Rawlsian institution may be considered just or unjust but not responsible. Institutions themselves do not act but rather they determine and constrain the actions of the agents that they govern. It seems more fitting, then to assign responsibility to the agents implicated in creating and implementing institutions. These agents may be individuals, but they may also be collectives. Some such

collectives are what Green Michael (2005) refers to as "institutional agents".

Regarding the idea of willingness, Leif Wenar once observed that, in the perspective of the audience they are intended for, government agencies and non-governmental organizations entrusted with distributing information about extreme poverty can lack epistemic credibility. Stated differently, we require an alternative method to evaluate the significance of beliefs that are subject to ambiguity. This means that we should consider whether wealthy people's behavior would be expected in a counterfactual universe where their views differ from what they currently report (Iason, 2016: 9). Iason made the observation that two items in particular jump out in support of his position. First of all, opinions regarding the effectiveness of aid organizations appear to be significant: if individuals could be certain that their money would get to the right place, this would probably result in a change in the amount of money they donate. In fact, according to one study that used a scale of one to four to rate trust in NGOs, a one-point increase in trust was associated with a 57% rise in the likelihood that someone would support sending more help to developing nations (World Bank, 2008). Second, opinions of the personal cost of aid appear to be quite important in this situation; if individual donors truly thought that the cost of aid was negligible or nonexistent, their actions would probably differ. Additionally, they would likely help those in poverty far more than they already do if they believed that doing so would benefit them personally (Iason, 2016: 9).

Assignment of remedial responsibility to individuals is infeasible. Also, a consideration of the reasons that allegedly make the assignment of remedial responsibility to individuals infeasible suggest that there are also reasons that may have contributed to the infeasibility of assigning remedial responsibility to institutional agents. Although, institutional agents are often more efficient than individuals when it comes to dealing with global poverty, but the assignment of remedial responsibility on this basis requires that the feasibility of doing so must be shown. No wonder, Miller (2007:8) once asserted that the problem of global justice can be treated by the way of personal ethics and by institutional approach. According to the first perspective, achieving global justice is a question of personal ethics: what duty do I have as an individual to help members of other political groups, especially those whose lives are extremely difficult? Governments and other institutions only play a supporting role when it is demonstrated that using them to carry out tasks that are largely the responsibility of individuals is the most efficient method to do so. He further emphasized

that one could conclude that this strategy was wholly incorrect. Since institutions have a major role in determining people's prospects in life on a worldwide scale, we should view institutions in a broad sense as the main focus of global justice (Miller, 2007:9).

Miller believes that the institutional approach to global justice is better than the personal ethical approach if we must pick between the two, but it might be even better to combine the two. This is because the institutional approach is unable to provide answers to some questions. There would be no issue if the influence of institutions could be used to simply and consistently explain global results. However, there are times when we come into circumstances that defy conventional explanations, in which case the pertinent question might be: what institutions, if any, should we establish? (Miller, 2007:10). One example is natural calamities, like the tsunami that swept through South Asia's coastal regions at the end of 2004. In this instance, both governments and individuals provided enormous amounts of aid for disaster relief, and most people would undoubtedly agree that they had a responsibility to do so if asked. However, some people may have viewed this as a humanitarian gesture rather than a duty of justice (Miller, 2007:11). Miller's argument is that if we view this duty as a matter of justice, as we ought to, then justice takes precedence over the organizations that will carry it out.

## The Relevance of Institutional Capacity and Willingness to addressing Poverty and Underdevelopment

In achieving a great eradication of poverty to its barest minimum in the global South, there is the need for the emergence of the Institutional Capacity and Willingness by the agents who are saddled with the responsibility of remedying the situations in the poorer nations. But before the explication of the institutional capacity and willingness, there is the need to identify and also discuss the responsibilities to the world poor which Nigeria and some other Nigeria states, Latin America are members. The arguments of Peter Singer and Thomas Pogge will be employed here.

Peter Singer, on his quest for the eradication of poverty maintained that 'if it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it' (Singer, 1972:231). He goes on to say that this idea directly relates to the situation of wealthy people who could donate funds to save the lives of people in developing nations who are in danger of starvation or illness. He arrives at the conclusion that the developed

nations have a moral duty to help, up until the point at which doing so would put us or our dependents below the welfare level of the world's poor.

Pogge, on his part, has maintained that because wealthy governments' residents bear some of the blame for the world's poverty, they are actually accountable for its creation. He went on to say that it is abundantly evident that poverty is the result of a global system that we in the developed world are all accountable for. He posits that:

> the under fulfillment of human rights in the developing countries is not a homegrown problem, but one we greatly contribute to through the policies we pursue and the international order we impose. We have then not merely a positive responsibility with regard to global poverty, like Rawls's 'duty of assistance', but a negative responsibility to stop imposing the existing global order and to prevent and mitigate the harms it continually causes for the world's poorest populations (Pogge, 2001:22).

Miller (2007:239) cites Pogge, who acknowledges that the domestic political and economic systems that the impoverished live under are frequently the direct causes of poverty worldwide. However, he contends that the international framework in which impoverished states are situated should be the primary means of explaining these domestic causes of poverty. He states that it is quite possible that national factors that tend to undermine the fulfillment of human rights would occur much less often, or not at all, within a different global order (Miller, 2007:239). To buttress this point, Pogge also affirmed that the present order encourages 'the emergence and endurance of brutal and corrupt elites' in developing societies. Moreover 'the primary responsibility for this institutional context, for the prevailing global order, lies with the governments and citizens of the wealthy countries because we maintain this order, with at least latent coercion, and because we, and only we, could relatively easily reform it (Pogge, 2005:22). According to Miller, Pogge's argument, in short, is that the citizens of rich countries should bear primary outcome responsibility for global poverty, and since the citizens of rich countries have the means at their disposal to end it, they are remedially responsible too.

In the quest of the eradication of poverty, David Miller alongside Pogge did not deny that the immediate cause of poverty in a particular society may be a defective set of economic and political institutions, or that the

reason why some societies have institutions that are inimical to growth, while others have managed to develop institutions that allow them to escape from serious poverty over a generation or two, may lie deep in the history and culture of the societies in question (Miller,2007:240). But he continues to attribute responsibility for poverty to rich societies by claiming, as already noted, that if the global environment were different, these national factors would produce different results.

The question we should be asking about the global order, then, is whether it provides reasonable opportunities for societies to lift themselves out of poverty, or whether it places obstacles in their path that are quite difficult to overcome, requiring an extraordinary economic performance on the part of a developing society. Miller buttressed his point by arguing that Ghana and Malaysia were equally poor countries when they gained their independence from Britain in 1957: now average incomes in Malaysia are over $3,000 per head, which is ten times greater than those in Ghana. Why should we think that the institutions and policies that explain Malaysia's success have at the same time contributed to keeping the Ghanaians poor? Why not think instead that if Ghana had followed Malaysia's example, or perhaps a somewhat different economic model appropriate to its circumstances (since there is no reason to think that there is just one blueprint for economic growth), its people would now be comfortably above the poverty threshold, as Malaysia's are?

In making this illustrative comparison, Miller does not mean to imply that the external circumstances confronting Ghana and Malaysia were the same in all respects. However, in so far as there is a 'global order' in Pogge's sense, they were both subject to it. Alternatively, if it is argued that these circumstances were very different in the two cases, this puts in question the very idea of a single 'global order' that rich countries impose uniformly on the world's poor (Miller,2007:240). After all ordinary people in poor countries cannot be held remedially responsible for abolishing their own poverty; that would be absurd. So, doesn't responsibility in the remedial sense inevitably fall on the shoulders of those who have the resources and the capacity to do something about world hunger and other forms of deprivation? This is where the question of institutional capacity and willingness surfaces.

On the issues of addressing poverty and underdevelopment in Africa, Walter Rodney (1972) has on the one hand held the position that the West is responsible for the underdevelopment of Africa. While George Ayittey (1992) on the other hand avers that Africans should look inwardly in solving her problems and it is naïve to blame black predicament on the

West. Let us begin our argument by dividing the two different views into camps, namely;

1. The Externalist camp

2. The Internalist camp.

For the purpose of clarification, the 'internalist' and 'externalist' can be described as two groups of scholars who identify diametrically opposed ideas on the causes of the underdevelopment of Africa, both groups identify problems confronting the developing countries especially the black person and they seek to find out the causes of the problems.

The externalist contends that the West underdeveloped Africa. Rodney enunciated that there are two major ways in which this process took place. Firstly, is the operation of the imperialist system which drained Africa's wealth and made it impossible for Africa to rapidly develop resources, the second deals with those who manipulate the system and those who are agents and accomplices of the system (Falaiye, 2005:45). Rodney's externalist position is built on four assumptions which are;

1. Africa was developed prior to the 15th century, albeit in a different direction from Europe's conception of development.

2. The European slave trade is at the root of black underdevelopment and stagnation.

3. Africans contributed significantly to European Capitalism during the colonial period.

4. Black underdevelopment is as a result of Western Colonialism.

Today, many authors have traced the root of the underdevelopment of the Third World Countries to the activities of the developed nations. Many scholars of socialist persuasion concede that the Third World Countries are not necessarily backward (or naturally so), but the wealth and resources of these regions have been drained and are still being exploited by some advanced countries of the world. In this respect, Patrick Bond cited Tony Blair's commission for Africa (CFA) in 2005 which suggests that: "Africa is poor, ultimately because its economy has not grown" (Bond, 2006: 1). Furthermore, Bond argues an externalist thesis that, instead, Africa is poor, ultimately, because its economy and society have been ravaged and

pillaged by international capital as well as local elites who are often propped up by foreign powers. According to Michael Parenti:

> If third world nations are impoverished, then, it is not because of their climate or culture or national temperament or some other natural condition but because of the highly unnatural things imperialism has been doing to them….as in parts of Africa south of sahara, the land has been so ruthlessly plundered that it too is now impoverished making life all the more difficult (Parenti, 1989: 112)

In the same vein, Claude Ake remarked that:

> … It was inevitable that the capitalist, forever bent on profit maximization, would look for a new environment in which the process of accumulation could proceed apace. Capitalist turned to foreign lands, attacked and subjugated them and integrated their economies to those of Western Europe. To date, the experience of Western imperialism, particularly colonization, remains the most decisive event in the history of Africa (Ake, 1981:19).

Ayittey (1998:2) on his own part opined that 'for almost thirty years everything that went wrong in Africa, was in the views of Africa's leaders and intellectuals, due to some external factors such as colonialism, western imperialism, slave trade etc. But he further explained that 'basic common sense tells one to look both ways before crossing a street, or risk being hit by a car'. Africa for him is in problem because its leaders looked only one way, that is, at the external factors. Ayittey identified bad leadership, defective political and economic systems, corruption, senseless civil wars, military vandalism, and flagrant abuse of human rights as the internal causes of Africa's crises. He also argued that only African can solve the African's problem and that the ultimate solution to Africa's problem lies in Africa. The solution, according to Ayittey, entails returning to Africa's root and building indigenous institutions upon it. He states:

> No one will tell you the truth about yourself. White people both in the media and academia, burdened by the collective guilt over the iniquities of slavery are unwilling

> to write ill of or criticize black African leaders for fear of
> being labeled racists. Black Americans are also unwilling
> to criticize, but must instead, express racial solidarity with
> black African leaders. So, if you are black African like me
> and you criticize the policies of the black African leaders,
> you are regarded as a traitor, an uncle Tom, and a right-
> wing conservative. Nonetheless! It is the reluctance to
> criticize African leaders that have aggravated the
> continent's woes (Ayittey, 1998:3).

Femi Falana, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), speaking on a TV
program on the 3rd of October, 2021, argued that if Nigeria is to forge
ahead in the right direction and to tackle the problems of poverty, then the
citizens must be mobilized to take charge of their political destiny. Falana
who was a guest on Channels Television Sunday politics said Nigeria has
refused to get it right by adopting policies that maintain structures mounted
by the British colonialists. According to him, for the majority of the
people, 1960 provided an opportunity to start all over again but
unfortunately, the nationalist politicians who took over the reins of power
from the British colonial regime did not decolonize the country and the
psyche of our people. In line with Falana, Ayittey observes that,

> Those who won their countries first elections subsequently
> transformed themselves into "life presidents". "Power to
> the people!" these leaders chanted, but they declared
> themselves presidents for life, refusing to give their people
> the real power to remove them. Colonialism was
> oppressive and raped Africa of its resources. Of course,
> these leaders never saw the oppression they were meting
> out to their own people…they looted Africa's wealth for
> deposit in Swiss bank accounts, while their own people
> starved. How were these leaders different from the
> colonialists? (Ayittey,1998: 23)

Ayittey contends that these same leaders, when asked about the causes of
black underdevelopment would, like Rodney and other externalist, discuss
external factors such as Slavery, colonialism, imperialism, the unjust
international economic system etc as the causes. They never discuss

possible internal factors, Ayittey concludes that ineffective leadership confounds efforts to find lasting solutions to black problems.

While asserting that Nigeria has done badly in the last 61years, Falana explained that the nation was ahead of many countries in Asia as of 1960 including Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and others. But some of these countries, he said, have become first-world nations but Nigeria has remained in the third-world. Falana blamed members of the ruling class which he said have in connivance with imperialism embarked on systematic underdevelopment of the country. He also stated that the abandonment of the constitutional model, the constitutional duties of the government and embracing neo-liberal policies that are subversive of the constitution have led the nation to where it is at the moment. According to him, the way forward is to ensure that our people are mobilized to take the political destiny of our country, their political destiny, in their own hands, and you are not going to do that by turning Nigeria into a dumping ground for all manners of boots. The Senior Advocate further stated that to get it right, the people must start forming groups in the country, adding that people must be mobilized to produce food and manufacture goods. It is in lieu of this that I want to support the arguments of both the internal and external factors as responsible for the setback African states are facing and Africans must be remedially responsible to find a way out of the terrible situation.

## Hunger and Poverty: Discourse on the solution to Hunger Problem in Nigeria

This section discusses the issue of hunger and offers some possible solutions to lessen poverty. The appalling living conditions of Africans are illustrated by several examples, some of which come from Nigeria. According to Toyin Falola (2018: 5), a man broke into his neighbor's Abuja apartment in August 2016 in order to steal a pot of rice and stew for his family to eat. A school teacher was thrashed till he was completely blind in Abuja that same year due to food theft. Foreign and local media outlets reported in November of that year that a fifteen-year-old had been lynched in Lagos for stealing food. When caught stealing an Amala pot in Ekiti, a woman pretended that she had to feed her kids. Another account of a lady being severely beaten for grabbing a pot of food from the fire

surfaced in September 2018. There is a plethora of more incidents from 2016 to the present. You get the idea, even though some of them were exaggerations: there is hunger in the land that has to do with food in the physical and the abstract senses. Given Nigeria's vast resources, we should be neither hungry nor poor, but the state of poverty in Nigeria has reached incredible heights. These personal stories reflect a broader national crisis. The statistics below provide empirical context on the scale of hunger and poverty in Nigeria:

**Table 1: Empirical Data on Hunger and Poverty in Nigeria (2020-2024)**

| Indicator | Time Period | Figure | Source |
|---|---|---|---|
| Multidimensional poverty | 2020–2022 | 63% (~133 million people) | National Bureau of Statistics (2022) |
| Acute food insecurity projections | Jun–Aug 2024 | ~26.5 million Nigerians | FAO Nigeria (2024) |
| Acute food insecurity projections | Jun–Aug 2025 | ~30.6 million Nigerians | FAO Nigeria (2025) |
| Children under 5 in severe food poverty | 2024 | ~11 million (1 in 3 children) | UNICEF Nigeria (2024) |
| Food insecurity rise | 2014–2022 | +133% (63.8m → 148.7m people) | BusinessDay (2024) |
| Food inflation | June 2024 | ~41% YoY; cost of healthy diet ≈ ₦1,241/day | National Bureau of Statistics (2024) |

These statistics show that Nigeria's hunger crisis is undeniably institutional, not simply a matter of food scarcity. Large-scale poverty, food inflation, and inadequate nutritional protection as highlighted above, points to institutional failures in execution capacity and political will.

However, with the amount of poverty and food security issues highlighted in the table above, the Nigerian government has, in one way or the other, initiated programs to intervene in order to curb these issues, one of which are the Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP) and the N-Power Social Investment Scheme. However, despite these bold initiatives—starting from the Anchor Borrowers' Programme and the N-Power Social Investment Scheme—evidence still reveals that institutional capacity and willingness have undermined the effectiveness of these interventions. Research has

revealed that the ABP in Kebbi and Nasarawa States, while the program has helped improve food supply, incomes, and living standards among smallholder farmers, still faces systemic issues which have undermined its success, including elite capture, poor oversight, and corruption, all of which limit its scalability and sustained impact (Badejo & Adekeye, 2018; Gona Ayuba et al., 2020). In this same vein, the evaluation of the N-Power Programme in Enugu States observed that it contributed significantly to youth poverty reduction and improved the standard of living, a, but irrespective of these gains, major challenges have been identified (Odalonu & Adigu, 2023). These include irregular stipends, inadequate funding, political interference, and a lack of linkage to sustainable opportunities (Odalonu & Adigu, 2023), all of which reflect the deficit in institutional willingness as much as in capacity as exposed by Komolafe et al., in the case of Lagos State N-Power empowerment programme (Komolafe et al., 2024).

Also, in the case of the Lagos State Government, most especially the *Ounje Eko* Initiative, which is the Eko Food Discount Market, launched around May 2024 to subsidize staple foods by 25%, its aim was to provide affordable access across 57 Local Government Areas (LGAs), Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs), and educational institutions. The program, however, successfully reached over 250,000 residents during its first phase, covering food items such as rice, beans, garri, eggs, tomatoes, and onions (GazetteNG, 2025). In fact, a new ₦500 million Farmers' Subsidy Programme was also introduced in early 2025 to support crop, poultry, and fish farmers with feed subsidies, fertilizer packages, and tractorization services (Vanguard, 2025). However, despite the bold plans listed above (excluding the newly launched ₦500 million Farmers' Subsidy), the implementation of the *Ounje Eko* initiative faced severe challenges. Specifically, Phase II of the *Ounje Eko* initiative was suspended in late 2024 due to vendor manipulation and system hijackings, which necessitated a review and suspension across many centers (BusinessDay, 2024; Punch, 2024). In other words, while the intention behind the initiative was commendable, the program's suspension and inconsistent restart reflect nothing other than institutional incapability to maintain oversight, transparency, and accountability.

These outcomes, as we have listed above, highlight the critical need for both capacity, which includes, in our context, reliable funding streams and transparent administration, and willingness, which includes, in our context, political commitment and accountability mechanisms, for interventions to translate into widespread hunger reduction.

According to the United Nations, food, they argue, is vital to human life, and it has significant cultural value. That is the reason why the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 25, Section 1 states that a right to eat is inherent to every human (United Nations, 1948). Throughout history, eating has been a major source of community and social interactions. Many philosophers have argued for the importance of food and have discussed how vital food is to the human's life. Abraham Maslow was one of the philosophers who argued for the importance of food. Maslow created the pyramid model ordering man's hierarchy of needs. At the bottom of the pyramid, he put the basic needs of food, shelter, and water. On top of this foundation, he placed safety, love and belonging, esteem, and then self-actualization (Maslow & Lewis, 1987). A right to food is included in the International Declaration of Human Rights because food not only provides life but is also the key to human dignity. Humans require food to move beyond their animal nature and work towards achieving any higher purpose. Hunger and poverty are sustained by the current global food system. According to Peter Singer and other contemporary philosophers, it is unethical for humanity to let this system continue to inflict pain in the absence of action (Singer, 2010:NP). Ethical arguments supersede the rhetoric of business or politics to advocate for humanitarian relief; the implications of these ethical arguments include increased land rights for farmers and investment in agricultural programs. Ethical critics of hunger advocate for international action through humanitarian efforts and urgent African investment in agricultural research and development (Falola, 2018:23).

Cultural rights are another layer of ethics in agriculture. The Banjul Charter states the rights of peoples as having dignity worthy of protection (Umozurike, 1983:907). The current global food system frequently violates these rights by disrupting various aspects of local cultures, including culinary traditions. Culinary multiculturalism is a policy adopted by nations depending on high amounts of imported, processed food. This system combines with tourism to commodify indigenous foods, making them unaffordable for their original communities (Misselhorn & Hendriks, 2017).

According to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), about 10.7% of the world's population is chronically hungry. That is 815 million out of the 7.6 billion people who inhabit the world (United Nations, 2017). This number is about two-and-a-half times the population of the entire United States (World Population Review, 2018). The United Nations states that "hunger and malnutrition are in fact the number one risk to health worldwide, greater than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis

combined (World Food Programme, 2018). Hunger is a complex issue with multiple definitions. Hunger statistics can fluctuate significantly, depending on how one defines it. Hunger is a more general term, describing the physiological sensation resulting from a lack of food security (Falola,2018:32).

In Nigeria today, the key to solving the food crisis lies in understanding the problems from various dimensions. It may seem simple, as if there is not enough food to feed everyone. The reality is that the world produces enough food per year to feed a population of 10 billion people. Solving the African food crisis is not a function of dividing the amount of food in the world by the entire population. It is a multidimensional issue. The two largest barriers for Africa's agricultural industry which later culminates to hunger and poverty are its environment and history of colonialism. On the one hand, the environmental factors affecting Africa's agricultural production include tropical temperatures, low water availability, and poor soil composition. To add more salt to the injury, there are also religious and ethnic conflicts which in turn have led to the reduction in the production of agricultural products in Nigeria. On the other hand, colonial agriculture was designed to provide cash crops for Europe. Colonial powers organized small farms to guarantee a steady supply of export crops, investing in infrastructure based on exportation needs instead of sustainability and community needs. These institutions of colonial agriculture were inherited by African nations after their independence, transferred to the ownership of the state. For a few decades after independence, states owned most of the farms and exercised tight control over crop prices. They were still exporting crops, but they ensured that enough was available for their own people and that these crops would be affordable. This over-regulation caused market decline and economic crisis (Merteens, 1999). As a result of this, Nations sank into tremendous debt, and they were forced to accept structural adjustment programs (SAP) proposed by the World Bank. The programs forced these nations to accept loans, pull out of the agricultural sector, and loosen their control over prices. The result transferred agriculture to the private sector. However, poor farmers were unable to compete with international prices. Agriculture was a risky investment, for environmental and political reasons, and farmers had difficulty attracting investors. Without financial support, they could not acquire the resources or technology necessary to intensify agricultural production and provide for their nations' growing populations (Jayne et al, 2010:138).

In order to "end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture," the UN has made food security the second pillar of its Sustainable Development Goals" (United Nations, 2018). It is important to remember that the UN has numerous other humanitarian initiatives aimed at reducing hunger in addition to food distribution. The United Nations and other international organizations work together to combat hunger on a worldwide scale. The World Food Program, the World Bank, the FAO, and the IFAD are some of these institutions.

Humanitarian aid donations to the UN are dependable but insufficient. The UN Secretary General issued a warning in February 2017 that if $4.4 billion could not be raised by March 20 of that year, a million people would perish from starvation. $277 million came from the United States, which has always been the biggest donor to the UN. By the end of March, the UN had raised billions of dollars less than a tenth of its total aim (Sengupta, 2017:NP).

I agree with Falola (2018:85), who asserts that specialists from all fields and levels of power must work together to address the African food problem. Land protection, agricultural improvement, and development support must be the main goals of interventions. Food security must be achieved by countries through environmental awareness, small-scale agricultural expansion, and poverty reduction. To protect African agriculture from the pressures of the global economy, policies must be developed. In order to encourage countries to seek far more sustainable solutions than food aid, international food security efforts should hold them more accountable for their commitment to reducing hunger.

Nigeria published statistics in 2017 demonstrating that it had significantly reduced hunger. The number of persons experiencing food insecurity fell from 4.7 million to 2.3 million in between 2017 and 2018. However, the food production and delivery infrastructure are under additional strain due to the ongoing fighting in the North-East, and in September 2018, there were 2.9 million people without food security (United Nations, 2018). Additionally, Unicef (2018) reported that around 11 million Nigerian children under five had stunted growth. A significant portion of the population—roughly 70% of Nigerians—live below the poverty line worldwide. (NFSP, 2018). Food insecurity and persistent poverty are exacerbated by Nigeria's place in the world economy. Additionally, oil plays a part in the economic and environmental issues facing the country.

Nigeria's economy formerly depended heavily on agriculture, but now it is reliant on exports. Imported rice is necessary for food security, and changes in the price of imported rice led to food insecurity.

The national food system is traumatized by recurring conflicts that devastate infrastructure and agriculture due to resource strains, environmental destruction, and persistent poverty. These are a few of the intricate political, economic, and environmental factors influencing Nigeria's food problem.

## Conclusion

In addressing the problem of poverty, Miller proposed his connection theory of remedial responsibility. He also avers that there are six factors of the connection theory which are moral responsibility, causal responsibility, outcome responsibility, benefit, community and capacity. He argued further that all the factors weigh equally and no one factor weighs above the other. This research has shown that capacity weighs more than other factors and has also proposed institutional capacity and willingness as a framework to the alleviation of poverty in the sub-Saharan Africa. However, in the context of global poverty, it is true that the role of individual is quite important in the alleviation of poverty but it is also true that since it's a global phenomenon, institutional capacity plays a greater role than the individuals. Willingness sets in whenever the question of greed, corruption, delay or lack of motivation is witnessed in the process of poverty alleviation.

According to this study, primary and postsecondary educational institutions play a critical role in addressing the hunger crisis through education. The recent decline in food insecurity demonstrates that these organizations are capable of offering crucial agricultural research and advocacy. However, the problems of ongoing violence, economic reliance, and environmental catastrophe necessitate vigorous investigation and action. Awareness in higher institutions and desire on the part of both individuals and institutions can be the focal point of the solution through research, inclusiveness, political activism, and community education. This is among the crucial roles that institutional capability and willingness play in reducing world poverty.

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