

A.R.I.S.E
Use the key...
BUILD

“Building A Secure Future: Seeking Practical Solutions”

3,850 words

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ABSTRACT

A.R.I.S.E, Use the **Key**, **BUILD** represents the major theme and effectively summarizes the ideas advocated in the three parts of the paper. My thesis is if we deal decisively with factors contributing to insecurity, which is defined broadly to connote a state of apprehension concerning the prospect for a suitable standard of living, we inadvertently begin the processes required to build a secure future.

The first part of the essay examines the many dimensions of economic insecurity, and proposes the **A.R.I.S.E** theory, an acronym for five steps that encompass: **A**id for development and security, where the need for a just trade system that will benefit poor and developed countries is also cited as a sine qua non to the economic development of poor countries, **R**eaching for the MDG's, where borrowing from Nigeria's National Economic Empowerment Strategy (NEEDS), I illustrate how other countries may begin incorporating the MDG's into their development agenda, **I**nsisting on Transparency Accountability, where developed countries are charged to desist from tacitly promoting corruption, **S**hare Technological Innovations, which advocates measures that can be adopted to close the development gap in the global community using technological innovations and **E**mphasis on Education, where direct investment in formal as well as informal education, internship opportunities and vocational training for young people is emphasized as a necessity for securing the future.

As an extension of the first part, the debt burden of poor countries is examined and a sustainable solution based on a debt cancellation formula is proffered. The role of the Bretton Woods Institutions in building a secure future also comes to focus, with a proposition that they review their operation methodologies and refrain from the one-size-fits-all approach to the development needs of poor countries, while fortifying the roles they play in the activities of the institutions.

The second part is dedicated to the youth- the **Key** to building a secure future. Certain measures such as capacity building, leadership training, education and partnership opportunities are emphasized as necessary steps that must be taken to enhance the capacity of youth to join in the development process.

In the third and final part, African leaders are charged to rise up to the challenge of development, while measures to curtail physical insecurity manifested as terrorism are suggested.

Finally, drawing from the remarkable response of the people of the world to the Tsunami tragedy, the role of individuals in **building** a secure future is stressed.

Today should go down in history as one of the very best days of my life. You see, my school was at the center of media attention in January following violent protests by students against the lack of infrastructure (electricity, water, transportation and adequate

accommodation), which made learning virtually impossible. The response by the school authorities was as automatic as it was autocratic- shut the school down till the students are clear-headed enough to realize they belong to a society where there is no electricity, water, transportation or accommodation. After two months of waiting, hoping and praying, school finally resumes today, and I, like 40,000 other students am absolutely delighted. Not even the malaria that has knocked me down since last week can wane my excitement: I'm on a mission to get an education.

45 minutes after leaving my apartment, and with a bit of athleticism, I get on the school-bound bus, which takes another 30 minutes, due to bad-road induced traffic to get to school. When I finally alight, I approach my faculty with cautious optimism- when students gather in groups to discuss issues in solemn tones, all cannot be well. Indeed I discover that all is not well. The school authorities have imposed a 10,000 Naira punitive fine for all full time undergraduate students, hostels of accommodation that were paid for earlier in the semester have altogether been shut down, therefore all students must commute on a daily basis. Besides, resumption date for my faculty has been shifted till mid-April. More importantly, the problems of infrastructure have not been addressed. It is impossible to describe my disappointment. As I make my way past industrious young students scalping “undertaking of good behaviour” forms in an apparent bid to raise the fine, I catch a glimpse of the headline in the daily newspaper: “Minister of Education, Senate President & others indicted over 55 million Naira Bribe”. My depression is complete: with 55 million Naira, there could have been electricity supply, there could have been water, my life process would not have been disrupted, and I would not have the challenge of raising the obligatory 10, 000 Naira in a little less than two weeks. It is at this very juncture that the malaria parasites remind me of their presence within my system and my head begins to pound- my vision is blurred. I wait under the scorching sun for a vehicle to convey me back to my apartment...the one that has been without electricity and water supply for onward of 15 days. **This is my reality.**

I am not apprehensive that some satellite in space may not pick up the signals of some terrorist making their way into my country, neither do I enjoy the luxury of being alerted that I may be within the same vicinity as a suicide bomber. My insecurities are much

broader in scope than insecurity is understood in the actual sense of the word. Often I wonder- will I ever finish my education (never mind the quality)? If I do, will I get a job- not necessarily a good job, but a job? And if I do, will it sufficiently provide my basic needs- food, shelter and clothing? And if it does, will I be free of diseases and illnesses to translate those needs to positive ends and be relevant in the development of my community? Most of all, will I ever be free from poverty, the summation of all my fears and insecurities? Answering these questions genuinely is crucial in seeking practical solutions to development challenges faced by millions of other people like myself in all parts of the world.

Poverty And Economic Insecurity: - Any realistic attempt at building a secure future must place in proper perspective poverty reduction measures to deal decisively with the issue of economic insecurity, for as James D. Wolfensohn rightly asserts, “The fight against poverty is the fight for global peace and security”¹. It has been tremendously disheartening to observe the current trend of expending time, energy, and resources however scarce or available in valiant attempts to define or modify the definition of poverty rather than actually deal with the issue itself to promote economic development and social stability. It is no wonder then that almost half of the world’s population, me inclusive, still lives in endemic poverty. According to Jeffery Sachs, a renowned economist, over 20 million people die annually from poverty related issues, translating to 22,000 people daily². Achieving a secure future must therefore begin with a radical modification in our attitudes and approach to development challenges that will from time to time arise.

In keeping with the objective of exploring feasible solutions, I propose the **A.R.I.S.E** theory, a strategy mapping out five major factors that can contribute to eradicating poverty and ensuring we begin to make concerted efforts to secure our future.

Aid for development and security: - Now more than ever before, the international community must address the quantity and effectiveness of aid coming into developing

¹ <http://www.imf.org/external/am/2000/speeches/PR04E.pdf>

² Book Excerpt: “How to end poverty” By Jeffrey D. Sachs- published in Time Magazine March 14, 2005. Pg 28

countries. The business-as-usual approach where aid is tied to several conditions cannot be sustained, for in practice, aid tied to conditions such as purchase of goods or services can, and do tend to reduce the worth and therefore restrict the impact of aid on development. A great starting point for a review of the aid mechanism is the G8 meeting scheduled for Scotland in July. At this meeting, governments of developed countries must make it their duty to fulfil their promise of increasing the Official Development Assistance to at least 0.7% of their Gross National Income as was agreed upon at the Monterrey meeting in Mexico. An essential point of note is that aid cannot be effective if they are not channeled to meet the direct needs of the poor people for presently as Patrick Watt observed, “a compelling slew of competing objectives and incentives mean that most aid is not spent on poor people or in the poorest countries, and rarely responds in a straightforward manner to recipient demands”.³ To rectify this anomaly, I refer back to the OECD Donor Assistance Committee Agenda drafted in Rome and suggest that they be revisited to ensure the proper flow and effectiveness of aid. Some of the recommendations contained in the agenda include reviewing the issue of the various conditions attached to aid, wasting of resources holding meetings and paying consultants to evaluate programs and constantly assessing the process to ensure accountability of both donors and recipients. To achieve this, an Independent Development Aid Monitoring Agency can be set up at the international and country level to annually monitor activities and evaluate the performance of donors and recipients in meeting the objectives for which the aid was proffered.

While it is essential to synergise the aid system, it is more imperative to build the capacity of countries to effectively utilize resources available at their disposal to secure funds for their own development. However much money is pledged or actually given to poor countries in form of aid, countries need to explore some of the many dimensions of globalization to ensure poverty reduction at a sustainable level. This can only be achieved by promoting **healthy** trade relations between countries. Giving aid to poor countries without focusing on sustaining an enabling environment for trade relations is equivalent to saying to poor countries “ok guys, here’s some money for your development, but

³ Paris Forum: Millstone or Milestone? What Rich Countries must do in Paris to make Aid work for Poor People: Patrick Watt, Arry Fraser & Max Lawson. www.actionaid.org

here's how far you can go". One of the major reasons poor countries have not benefited from globalization is the high level of trade injustice within the system. Poor countries have to contend with trade barriers, excessive regulations, and rules guiding trade in the global economy. A situation where countries such as the US subsidize farm products thereby making it difficult for poor farmers in Africa for example, to not only export their products, but also compete favourably within their local markets cannot be continued if we truly want to build a secure future. Rich countries need to make their markets accessible so poor countries can begin to enjoy some of the benefits of globalization.

Reaching for the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's): - With the current level of underdevelopment, it would be a miracle if up to half of the world's countries attain the MDG's. This proposal that charges countries to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve health, combat HIV Aids, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability and develop a global partnership for development⁴ by 2015 is the launch pad on which poor countries can achieve meaningful development. To achieve these goals especially in poor countries, focus needs to shift gradually from the countrywide approach to a more sectoral approach in creating awareness that is currently lacking in countries such as Nigeria. At the MDG's Summit coming up in September, it would be important to address the role of the United Nations in forming **collaborative** partnerships with local organizations and associations to create awareness while at the same time address the issue of funding to achieve these goals. Countries also need to be encouraged to align their development strategies with the MDG's.

The MDG's and our NEEDS- In March 2004, the Government of Nigeria developed the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy- NEED's to deal with its development challenges. Despite the ambitious nature of this policy and its innumerable flaws, which have given rise to much derision, it is vividly apparent, that this document is the closest Nigeria has come to defining and articulating a framework for achieving the MDG's. While this document has received the blessing of the World Bank and IMF, it

⁴ The Millennium Development Goals: www.un.org/millenniumgoals/

would be important to re-examine it so as to accommodate the recommendations of other stakeholders within the Nigerian society including the media, NGO's, Women's Group, and the Youth. For aside from technical assistance and aid required to specifically assist Nigeria attain the mid-term objectives contained in this document, a concerted effort by the people to whom it is addressed is paramount.

Countries need to be encouraged to develop homegrown strategies such as NEEDS and when the document comes out imperfect like ours has, citizens and members of civil society have a duty to constructively make recommendations to perfect such policies, while international agencies can provide the funds- without attaching conditions to achieve the objectives of the policy. This way, issues bordering on the crisis of ownership of the policies to implement the MDG's will not arise.

Insisting on transparency and accountability: - It has been an incredible experience growing up in a country that has been adjudged by Transparency International to be perceived as the 3rd most corrupt in the world. The active role of developed countries in policing corrupt leaders who milk national treasuries is a sine qua non for the economic growth and stability of poor countries. They must play more significant roles in ending corruption in poor countries by ensuring that looted funds are not safe anywhere in the world. They need to shut their gateways- literally- to such thieving dysfunctional mis-rulers. European countries especially, through the European Union should consider imposing stiff penalties on banks that operate as water beds for these leaders who rape their countries of scarce resources for development. The European Commission should assist by implementing strict guidelines and procedures for the maintenance of accounts by individuals, especially public officers from developing countries. Particularly, monies discovered to have been stashed in such banks should be channeled to a fund that can be set up, and then returned to the country to aid the development process.

Share Technological Innovations: - We live in a constantly evolving global community, where, while some live in mansions, others find refuge in mud huts with thatched roofs. To begin the development process, poor countries must harness the potential of ICT for

development, while developed countries should provide them the opportunities to key into the knowledge economy. While necessary policies should be put in place to ensure that new technologies are utilized to ensure development on all frontiers, developed countries can provide technical and material assistance. Aside from the development of viable ICT policies, basic IT training is an angle that can be developed. An example of a program that should be strengthened and replicated in other poor countries is the Youth for Technology campaign organized by a group of youth in Lagos in 2004. Youth leaders downloaded resources on basic use of the internet, translated them to Yoruba- the major language of young people in Lagos, then spent two weekends working with local cyber café's to train these youth in Internet technology. This scheme could not be sustained due to the large turn out of youth and lack of funds and technical assistance. Such a scheme is workable if international organizations build partnerships with local NGO's to transfer knowledge, resource materials, computers, and ideas to young people.

Emphasis on Education: - Aside from poverty, education- or the absolute lack of it, poses a great threat to building a secure future. If we build a crop of illiterate leaders, then the world is as secure as a maximum-security prison is with its gates flung wide open. Goal 2 of the MDG's- achieving universal primary education is a good start but not enough. Direct investment in formal as well as informal education is important to develop a vast resource of human capital that most poor countries are blessed with. Multinational corporations in poor countries have as much a role to play in this regard as do governments, especially where gender disparity in the level of education is concerned. They can offer internships to young people, while summer camps where vocational training can be organized to enable them acquire informal education can be organized in collaboration with local NGO's. Rather than just send aid, international organizations can send educational resources and volunteers to assist local organizations build their knowledge base. With such a scheme, the chain of poverty and unemployment can be severed sustainably.

The **A.R.I.S.E** theory would make little sense if other factors that contribute to poverty such as debt overhang are ignored.

Debt vs. Development and Security: - Africa currently pays \$15 billion annually in interest fees to her creditors, while Nigeria spends \$1.7 billion per annum servicing her debts⁵. In the realm of economic development and poverty eradication this amount is untenable. Some countries have canvassed outright cancellation, others seek to review the debts, while some opine that debt cancellation is an idealistic solution. On whatever side of the argument we find ourselves, the inescapable reality is that a sustainable solution must be sought to assuage the poverty experienced by heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC's). The simple truth is we mortgage our future by accumulating these debts, for development can only be sustainable if the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet theirs⁶. It is deplorable that my country pays \$1.7 billion annually servicing debts that were accumulated long before I was born- three and nine times what it currently spends on education and health respectively.⁷ Little wonder then why I am out of school longer than I am in, why malaria is as pervasive as headaches in Nigeria despite the fact that it kills. Countries with this sort of debt overhang cannot meet the MDG's. A sustainable debt strategy must therefore be evolved. Having experienced the negative effects and fully appreciating the severity of the debt problem, I suggest a formula for negotiation to achieve a resolution that would be favourable to creditors and debtors, with the primary objective being to ensure development of HIPC's. An Independent Debt Arbitration Panel should be set up to audit these debts. A resolution should then be reached based on a formula where at most 30% of the debt should be repaid over a certain period, while the remaining 70% be used to foster development in the country. In this sense rather than actually pay back the owed sum and wait for it to return in form of aid, creditors would work closely to ensure that the monies are channeled to some development project, for example the provision of stable electricity in the poor country. Sanctions and penalties would be imposed in cases of default or diversion of these funds for other purposes.

The Bretton Woods Institutions: - The three major institutions involved with financial activities of countries of the world- The World Bank, the IMF and the WTO must also review their strategies and focus their energies on helping all of the world, rather than

⁵ Thisday Newspapers. Thursday March 10, 2005 Vol 11 No. 3609

⁶ Beyond Economic Growth: Meeting the Challenges of Global Development. WBI Learning Resources Series by Tatyana Soubbotina and Katherine Sheram Pg 9

⁷ Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. Nigeria's Finance Minister- www.guardian.co.uk/debt/Story/0,2763,1402328,00.html

their rich members. Their role in securing a better future, love them or hate them is absolutely indispensable. These institutions, especially the IMF have come under scathing criticism for their approach to the development of poor countries. Much of this is as a result of Structural Adjustment Programs that are not structural and aid that is tied to numerous conditions that are not tailored to meet the development needs of the countries to which they are addressed. In many cases, as in the SAP program in Nigeria during the Babangida era, more harm than good is done. They need to shift from the one-size-fits-all approach to development. A radical but systematic reform is required to alter operation methodologies of these institutions. They must also become more democratic and fortify the roles played by poor countries in their activities. Broader participation is required to better appreciate and be more responsive to the actual needs and actual solutions- rather than perceived needs and prescribed solutions of developing countries.

Build the Youth, Secure the Future: - Youth empowerment should play a more prominent role on the development agenda of the world's leaders. Rather than inviting youth leaders as an after thought when discussing the problems plaguing the world, youth should be involved in the process from the beginning. We need to be viewed as development partners: The key to building a secure future for the world, lies in unlocking the inherent potential of the worlds young people to make positive use of their energy, youthfulness and creativity. Youth organizations, especially those from developing countries need to be a vibrant part of attaining the development goals. The more youth issues are overlooked, the more the issues of the future are ignored. Programs such as the International Youth Parliament currently supported by Oxfam need to be supported, expanded and replicated to develop the capacity of youth to assist in the development process. In addition, a more vibrant, democratic International Youth Foundation that coordinates and acts on behalf of youth needs to emerge. This would entail replicating the ideals of the European Youth Parliament across other continents. This would see the emergence of such bodies as the African and Asian Youth Parliament that will work in collaboration with the International Youth Foundation on youth development issues. To achieve this, certain steps should be taken:

Capacity Building: This would involve training and linking youth with available resources to enhance their capacity for sustainable development.

Education: - Formal and informal education is necessary for development. Focus should also be on helping youth solve their unemployment problems, by enlightening them on the advantages of entrepreneurship and the SME's, while linking them with available credit options.

Leadership: - The average young person, at least from Africa, has a warped conception of leadership, based on the current example of leaders. Leadership training on the international, national and regional level must become a priority for the world's leaders.

Engage them: Youth should be actively involved in all spheres of development processes. It is not enough to hear our voices; we must be part of the change process and active partners in securing the future.

A more secure Africa: - African leaders have to trade the sniveling victim mentality with a more productive and proactive attitude towards development. The challenges of Africa are numerous but the answers lie in Africa with Africans. Our leaders must strive to ensure the true democratization of its countries and strengthen her democratic institutions. Under the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) program, leaders should strive to address issues of transparency, accountability and regional security, proffering solutions to the challenges that will arise. Mechanisms must be put in place to address misappropriation of funds and abuse of authority, while we must accept the fact that the era of aid and charity has (hopefully) come and gone with the times, allowing a new era of true partnerships to emerge. Everyone wants a partner they can trust therefore it is up to the leaders to redefine their core values and be more accountable in addressing the needs of the people.

Physical insecurity presents an enormous threat to the world's people. Terrorism is sweeping through the global community, affecting all people- developed and developing countries alike. The consequences for developing countries are especially more

devastating. Kenya, a country in which more than half its population live below the national poverty line of less than one dollar per day, and one that thrives on its tourism potential felt it when American tourists were targeted by terrorists. So did Indonesia, and Egypt amongst others. The tongue-in-cheek approach to terrorism cannot continue. A starting point would be to reform and strengthen the UN Security Council to make it more efficient and responsive. The world's countries should also sign and implement the comprehensive convention on terrorism. Vulnerable and poor countries that may become hideouts for terrorists due to the porous nature of their borders and already existing insecurity need to be supported by forming regional partnerships with international security agencies to help them tackle this area of the problem. Finally, the people of the world should be more vigilant and cooperative with security agencies in reporting suspicious activities.

The World's Spirit shone through the despondency of the Tsunami disaster. Citizens, governments and organizations of developed and developing countries rallied round to assist in rebuilding the lives that were devastated by the tragedy. It is this same spirit that is required of us all to provide food and clean water, to provide shelter and comfort, and to provide hope in a world of diminishing hope to millions of poor people who lay on sick beds on empty stomachs, too weak to feel hungry or shed a tear, patiently awaiting death. It is with this same spirit that we- you and I, can build a secure future.

It is now twelve days since I started writing this paper. Within that time, my country has lost its Minister for Education, lost its Housing Minister, lost its Inspector General of Police and in one fell swoop, lost its Senate President to the war against corruption. This is hopeful news. If we continue making a conscious effort, matched with will and commitment, if we **genuinely** adopt some of the recommendations contained in this paper, then the world may be a more secure place to live, if not by 2015, then in the not too remote future. **This is my Prayer**

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