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BEYOND DEVELOPMENT RHETORICS IN NIGERIA: A RETHINK OF WHAT WENT WRONG

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Abstract
The focus of this paper is on failed developmental efforts made by Nigeria. In the front burner in Nigeria is the quest to develop. This has been reflected in the addresses and attempts of past leaders and administrations. Unfortunately, these efforts had not yielded the expected dividend. Methodologically, the paper drew essentially from secondary source of data collection. It x-rayed the concept of development from various perspectives, underdevelopment indicators in the country, past and present developmental efforts as well as the shortcomings of previous attempts captured in what went wrong. It asserted that the success of policies and programmes such as the past development plans, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), 7–Point Agenda, Transformational Agenda and Vision 20–2020 which were/are aimed at moving the country to the next level of development is heavily dependent on how well corruption is fought. Conclusively, pertinent evidences and questions were raised which further posit that the march towards the development of the country is still tortuous and may just amount to motion without speed.

Keywords: development, poverty, corruption, rhetorics, amnesty

INTRODUCTION

In line with the constitutional provision that situates the security and welfare needs of the citizens in the hands of governments, different administrations in Nigeria had adopted several development policies over the years to meet this pursuit. Conscious planning actually started in the country since 1946 when the colonial masters introduced the Ten Years Plan of Development and Welfare for Nigeria. Since then, there has been development plans by successive governments. As at today the development plan of the late Yar'adua/Jonathan/Sambo administration is anchored mainly on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), 7 - Point Agenda, Transformation Agenda and Vision 20-2020.

The irony is that despite the series of development efforts made by past and present governments such as the 7-Point Agenda and even with two years to the MDGs deadline of 2015, two years plus into the implementation of the Transformation Agenda and seven years to the deadline for the actualization of Vision 20-2020, indices in the country still tilt more towards underdevelopment and failed state. Thus it has been motion without speed.

The motivation for this paper is to ascertain if in the light of the above, sustainable development in the real sense can be achieved in Nigeria. This work is apt at this time as it stands to help scholars, policy makers and development partners appreciate why past development initiatives have not met the desired results in Nigeria. Besides, periscoping into contemporary realities as a third world country, the question of sustainable development is brought to the fore.

This paper therefore sort to address the concept of development, underdevelopment indicators in Nigeria, government developmental efforts through institutional and capacity building, and what went wrong in the process that has rendered all efforts made in the past and present futile.

The Facets of Development

The concept of development has been viewed from different perspectives. To Rodney (2005) development implied increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self discipline, responsibility and material well being at the level of the individual while it connotes increased capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships at the level of social groups and state. It is also seen as innovative process leading to the structural transformation of social systems.

Political development has also been seen by Lucian Pye as the ability of a state to successfully resolve the variety of problems that include participation, penetration, distribution, legitimacy, identity and integration while others argued that development can be viewed from the democracy perspective. Thus democracy has the potentials to facilitate the mobilization of structures and resources of society as well as institutions and processes of governance towards development hence it is fundamental to the development of society (Ojo, 1997). It therefore creates room for more continuous space for political participation. Jhingan (2007) opined that economic development is more output and changes in the technical and institutional arrangement by which production and distribution takes place.

Sustainable development on the other hand means meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations. It represents the improvements in the quality of life of all the people through increases in real income per capita, improvements in education, health, general quality of life and natural environment (*ibid*). Jhigan further opined that

economic development is mostly measured in four ways – Gross National Product (GNP), GNP per capita, economic welfare and social indicators. Omorogbe (2000) identified the per capita method, Dudley Seer's approach, the composite method and the physical quality of life approach as the major ways of measuring development. Specifically to Seers (1977), a major way of determining development in/of a polity is to resolve the challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality by asking what has been happening to them. Therefore the level of poverty in a nation is a determinant for measuring the success and failure of any administration. The desperate and helpless situation created by poverty often results in social vices such as violence, vandalism, high crime rate in form of armed robbery, theft cases, thuggery, deviant and indecent behavior and lack of capacity to participate in politics and economic sphere of the country.

Underdevelopment Indicators in Nigeria

Nigeria is a country that is blessed with vast natural resources such as crude oil, vast arable land, markets, large population, minerals and cash crops. Ironically, she presents serious underdevelopment indicators. Preconditions for development such as political stability, committed and responsive leadership, availability of natural resources (though untapped and where tapped, is misused), mass participation of the people, responsive bureaucratic structure, dynamic cultural climate, functional educational system and sustainable legal environment are lacking.

Poverty is acute in rural areas in Nigeria and some geo-political zones are particularly harder hit than others by the phenomenon while unemployment kept souring with the worst affected age bracket being 13 – 25 years (FRN, 2006). The Nigeria's democratic experience had neither served the purpose of political emancipation nor led to economic betterment of the citizens. This is especially in the face of endemic poverty, hunger, unemployment and progressive disempowerment of a large chunk of the population. The elections are still marred by violence, fraud and other irregularities. Again the actualization of the MDGs in Nigeria is still challenged by poor leadership, insincerity in governance, policy inconsistency, lack of adequate data base, high level of corruption, development policy assistance focused, and lack of adequate tools for measurement. Some growth indices are often paraded by the Nigerian government, but there is a mismatch or disconnect between it and existing realities as the country still exhibits large symptoms of underdevelopment as reflected in the socio-economic lives of Nigerians. About 68% of the population currently lives below the poverty line of $1.25 per day. The rapid urbanization, put at over 5% per annum, exerts severe pressure on ailing infrastructure. Nigeria is further ranked as one of the twenty-five poorest nations in the world. This further intensifies youth unemployment.

Poor governance and extended internal conflict and terrorist acts such as the Boko Haram, weak security, fractured societal relations and high level of corruption are common incidences in Nigeria. There is lack of mechanism for generating legitimate power and authority with huge backlog of investment needs and huge debt burden. Low technology, high infant mortality, human flight, and political instability, militancy and terrorism are common characteristics of the country.

After thirteen years of implementation of the MDGs and two years to the dateline – 2015, 80% of urban dwellers still to live in slums in Nigeria; inequality is still stark; the quality of urban housing is costly, while the urban poor often resort to living their lives in slums where water, sanitation, health and other facilities are inadequate or lacking. The living conditions are crowded and usually unhealthy while the dwellers are vulnerable to environmental disasters and pollution. The UNDP has stated that Nigeria is not one of the Africa countries recording remarkable improvement in its Human Development Index (HDI) (Channelstv, 2013). The Human Development Report 2012 on Nigeria showed that the HDI for Nigeria is 0.471 which gave the country a rank of 153rd out of 187 countries with comparable data. Life expectancy was 52 years, and adult literacy rate (for both sexes) was 61.3% (http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profile/NGA.html). About one million Nigerian children were given out for forced and exploitative labour, of which 18% work in dangerous environments after school hours. Ten million Nigerian children of school age had been reported to be out of school as shown by statistics on school enrolment released by UNICEF.

The power and energy sector are very critical and central to the survival of any nations' economy. In Nigeria, the power sector remains comatose. That Nigerians live more in darkness is no longer news. Productivity in all sectors of the economy is affected. Due to poor power supply, big companies like Dunlop, Cadbury, Unilever and PZ have threatened to shut down while most of the other companies have resorted to the use of generators and plants with the attendant cost of industrial output and health implications on Nigerians. The same problem had bedeviled the health sector where infrastructures are in dilapidated state. Hospitals are mere consulting rooms giving rise to increased overseas travel for medical attention with the attendant capital flight. The same goes for Nigerian roads that have turned death traps for commuters. There is also high level of insecurity manifested in increased armed robbery, kidnappings and other forms of violent attacks such as militancy in the Niger Delta and Boko Haram.

Development Policies and Past Efforts in Nigeria

Efforts had been made in the past to develop the Nigerian state. Such efforts can be examined from different fronts. The analysis will center on political, economic and industrialization, agriculture, Niger Delta and mass mobilization/reorientation required for national development.

Politically, there have been policies such as grass root democracy; decreeing into existence of two political parties (Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC)) by government; banning and un banning of political bigwigs and moneybags; adoption of option A4 voting system; liberalization of the formation and registration of political parties as recorded in the periods before 2007 elections; and electoral reforms of 2006 and 2010. Through the instrumentality of the law courts, there is increasing faith in the judiciary and electoral process with the annulment of fraudulent election results. For example, the elections of the following former governors - Professor Osariemhen Osunbor (Edo State), Dr. Olusegun Agagu (Ondo State), Dr. Chris Ngige (Anambra State) and Celestine Omehia (Rivers State) were annulled due to brazen electoral malpractices. They were however replaced by Comrade Adams Oshiomhole (Edo State), Dr. Olusegun Mimiko (Ondo State), Mr. Peter Obi (Anambra State) and Chief Rotimi Amaechi (Rivers State) respectively.

Economically, such policies as the Indigenization Policy; Austerity Measure; Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) with it component parts of import substitution and export promotion; Banking reform 2004/05; Privatization and Commercialization; Deregulation of the downstream petroleum sector; Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP); and National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) had been initiated and implemented at various times. Attempts had also been made to industrialize the Nigerian state through several National development plans such as the first, second, third and fourth which were initiated, launched and implemented in 1962, 1970, 1975 and 1981 respectively. The Vision 20-2020 and the 7-Point Agenda were also designed to fast track the country's development. The same goes for the Transformational Agenda.

In the agricultural front there have been Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) initiated in 1970; Green Revolution initiated in 1980; River Basin Authority; Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) established in 1986; Back to Land and Cassava Initiatives. They were all geared towards providing access to rural areas, provision of employment, ensuring food security and sufficiency.

Attempts were also made in the past to mass mobilize/reorientate Nigerians and the Nigerian psyche. The Ethical Revolution Programme; Mass Mobilization for Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER); War Against Indiscipline (WAI); Jaji Declaration; National Rebirth; War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC); and the Rebranding Nigeria Project are some of the notable efforts.

In the Niger delta there is no gainsaying the fact that several measures had been adopted by successive regimes aimed at addressing the Niger Delta conflict. Such measures/strategies which had been put in place since 1999 to address community agitations and militancy in the region are adequately documented by Omorogbe and Odion (2009). They included the implementation of 13% derivation (excluding offshore) in 2000. The revenue allocation based on derivation got reduced from 50% in 1968 to 1% in 1988/89 and up to 1999. The establishment of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2000 with the major philosophy being to ***quicken the development of the nine oil-producing states***; the Alexander Ogomudia Special Security Committee in 2001 which recommended amongst others the training of Niger Delta indigenes for employment in oil companies, provision of infrastructure and industrialization in the region; the creation of Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs (MNDA) in 2008 and the appointment of persons from the Niger Delta region as pioneer Minister - Chief Ufot Ekaette and Minister of State - Elder Godsday Orubebe respectively of the new Ministry; and a more decisive step taken by the federal government in its avowed commitment to bringing enduring and lasting peace, security and development to the nation's Niger Delta is the granting of **amnesty** in 2009 (Odion, 2010).

The amnesty aimed at restoring law and order in the troubled area and generate the enabling environment for accelerated development in the region and nation. It further aimed at encouraging the combatants/militants to voluntarily come forward and reconcile with the society thus demilitarizing the region with the resultant reduction in crimes and criminality (Abbe, 2009). Achieving peace, reconciliation, reintegration, healing and sustainable development therefore formed the focal point of the amnesty which had since been achieved.

What Went Wrong

What went wrong in the context of this paper constituted the reasons adduced for the failure/inability of the programmes to meet desired goals. It represents the neo-colonial contradictions and pathologies for explaining the inability of Nigeria to effectively translate her vast resource endowment and developmental potentials into the highest possible advantage. These were lack of coordination and commitment; lack of continuity; improper appreciation of the roots and magnitude of the problems; poor funding of the designed programmes; policy inconsistency; deficient infrastructural facilities; and corruption (Muo, 2007)

Lack of transparency and accountability had significantly contributed to poverty and economic stagnation or recession by facilitating corruption. Corruption is a major threat and cankerworm to national development. It is endemic at every levels of government and has made leaders to be vastly wealthy with a culture of impunity while leaving a vast majority in abject poverty. According to the United Nations (1997),

> "*Corruption in government increases poverty in many ways. Most directly, it diverts resources to the rich people, who can afford to pay bribes and away from the poor people who cannot. But it also skews decisions in favour of capital-intensive enterprise (where the*

> *pickings are greater) and away from labour intensive activities more likely to benefit the poor. Corruption also weakens government and lessens their ability to fight poverty. It reduces tax revenue and thus the resources available for public services".*

It could be deduced from the above that corruption is a cancer that inhibits development in a number of ways. The ways are that the corrupt use of national budgets diverts scarce resources away from development; corruption deters investments as it increases the risks for domestic and international investors and businessmen trying to work in corrupt societies, wasting their time as well as money in dealing with corrupt officials; and corruption hurts the poor especially (Mills, 2001).

Public corruption is one reason for the development of poverty and underdevelopment in most countries as well as stumbling block to the people's enjoyment of economic/social dividends and Nigeria is no exception. Incidentally, the rating of countries on the Corruption Perception Index by Transparency International has elevated Nigeria to the 130th position in 2009 from 121st it occupied in 2008, out of 180 countries it surveyed in 2009 (Omoh, 2009). That corruption is still prevalent and waxing strong as reflected in the pension scam and oil subsidy investigations in contemporary times, in face of existing institutions and agencies of the federal government such as the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), is an indication of the failure of same to combat the scourge.

To further demonstrate how serious a hindrance corruption is to development in Nigeria, statistics had shown that oil production generated about $500billion since 1960, and yet some 54% of Nigerians continued to live below a dollar a day. One of the worst hit (impoverished) regions in all of Nigeria is perversely the Niger Delta itself from where ironically government derived about 97.5% of the country's export revenue and about 81% of government revenues (Grant, 2009). The situation persisted in the region due to the insensitivity of successive governments to the plight of the people in the region particularly by military regimes.

Studies by World Bank and the EFCC had also estimated that between $400billion and $500billion had been stolen by corrupt officials over time. The revelations in the power sector investigation where legislative officials were alleged to be involved in about N5.2billion fraud sends dangerous signals. Therefore, if development must be sustained, there is the need for an all out war against corruption since it has the capacity to instigate agitations, instability, underdevelopment and social tension in an environment of abject poverty.

Poor programme conception; implementation and weak institutional support; lack of focus in terms of names and method of operation; duplication of functions/severe overlap among the programmes; poor funding as a result of over reliance on external bodies; lack of legal backing for some of the programmes had also been identified by Adeyemo and Alayande (2001) cited in Odion (2009) as reasons for the failure of development programmes.

In the area of poverty alleviation and agricultural development, the NEEDS pointed out several factors that had hindered the effort of government at reducing the level of poverty and ensuring food security/sufficiency. These included poor coordination; the absence of a comprehensive policy framework; excessive political interference; ineffective targeting of the poor leading to leakage of benefits to unintended beneficiaries; the unwieldy scope of programme which caused resources to be thinly spread across too many projects; overlapping functions leading to institutional rivalry and conflicts; the absence of sustainability mechanisms in programmes and projects; and lack of involvement of beneficiaries in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The evidence suggests that the reforms and policies have not recorded the spectacular results expected. Thus the poverty alleviation remains a paradox in Nigeria (NPC, 2004). Udeala (2009) also attributed the failure of NEEDS to the fact that it was a pro-west policy which actually exacerbated mass poverty and increased human suffering through unemployment and loss of earnings.

Some of the constraints to developmental efforts in the Niger Delta region included under funding of the NDDC, insincerity and corruption in government circles, the problem of gladiators that paraded themselves as community leaders, board room disagreements amongst NDDC members, the illusion of more conflict resolution mechanisms (committees) set up, the higher the likelihood of achieving peace in the region (Omorogbe and Odion, 2009). In no distant time, we may also witness conflicting responsibilities as a result of overlapping functions of the NDDC and the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs.

In a nutshell, foreign designed programmes such as SAP undermined the Nigerian potentials. It came with excruciating impact on the local population which led to violent resistance and the demand for socio-economic and political changes in favor of multi-partism and popular democracy.

Politically, features such as weak political party organization, weak governance structure, the clientelist relationship between the leaders and followers that usually undermine electoral accountability and promote corrupt practices, godfatherism in politics, ethnic/religious conflict, and incidences of military rule have made political development difficult. Other features that have threatened the polity and make democratic consolidation a Herculean task include lack of good governance by leaders, heated post election contestations arising from massive electoral fraud and malpractices, and lack of genuine commitment to developmental efforts by leaders. Funding problems sometimes occasioned by

militancy and oil theft in the Niger Delta have also negatively impacted.

The character of the Nigerian state is such that allows for predatory and primitive acquisition/accumulation of wealth. Access to government is easy means of prebendal acquisition for self, cronies and family. This have led to governance failure as leaders end up showing little, weak or no commitment to development issues. This phenomenon has also been extended to politics with very high stakes, post election violence as recorded in the northern parts of the country shortly after the April 16, 2011 presidential elections, as well as the winner-take-all syndrome. Opposition is weak and muzzled down, such that it is unable to engage in constructive criticism required for the introduction of change that will necessitate development. The electoral management authority(ies) is/are daily challenged by the desperate intentions of politicians who have found elections a weak test to gain access into the national treasure where looting is unlimited. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was challenged with over two hundred court cases shortly before the 2011 elections by desperate politicians.

Can Sustainable Development be Achieved in Nigeria?

Some pertinent questions at this juncture are begging for answers which further confirm the tendencies in contemporary times by Nigerian leadership to undermine development and reveal the fictiveness of such development efforts. For example why will the EFCC and ICPC watch aloof the billions that were spent on Obasanjo's failed tenure elongation bid? Why will the Ministry of Niger Delta allow the rot in the region and spend millions of naira on consultants(cy) at the expense of project execution as alleged and discovered by the Federal House of Representative Committee on Niger Delta headed by Hon. Olaka Nwogu (Tordue, 2009) in the course of their legislative oversight? Why will the government accommodate the board room disagreement/crisis between the Chairman of NDDC and other members of the board even when it was detrimental to project execution and national interest? Why will the government and its institutions such as the EFCC and ICPC sit and watch the House of Representatives turned into a boxing and violent ring over allegations of financial impropriety with its attendant show of shame? Why will elected government officials whose elections were annulled not made to refund salaries, allowance and stipends collected within the period? Why will the stipends approved for the ex renounced militants to facilitate the peace process in the Niger Delta be withheld even when they threaten to go back to militancy? Why will government still spend up to $2.8billion to import rice in 2009 as claimed by Azania (2009) even with the fertile and vast arable land which the country is blessed with? Why will the government of President Goodluck Jonathan propose and spend over N10billion to celebrate the golden jubilee independence anniversary in the face of high level insecurity, unemployment, bad roads and epileptic power supply? Why will a government agency such as the INEC require as much as N74billion Naira for fresh voter register which is supposed to be a continuous exercise and another more than N15billion for 2011 elections in the face of high level of poverty and inability to pay tertiary institution lecturers and health workers? Why will Nigeria (with its decayed infrastructure, failed refineries and economic problems) service each Senator of the Federal Republic with as much as N200million (about $1.7million) annually as against about quarter of a million dollar (Obasanjo, 2010) in the case of America? How about spending as much as N200million Naira of tax payer's money on mere beautification in Benin City? In the era of solar energy, Edo State Government currently propels the street lights in the state capital – Benin City with diesel. What developmental benefits is there for Nigerians in the N90million allocation in the NDDC 2010 budget which was approved by the National Assembly for weddings of staffs and other social activities of the staffers of the commission and the extra N4billion included in the budget of NDDC by the same National Assembly even when the Commission did not ask for it; and even in the face of youth unrest in the region, poverty and serious environmental degradation? Imagine a country yearning for development affording to loose the sum of N7.3billion daily to oil theft in Nigeria (Ehichioya, 2013). In the face of insecurity such as kidnapping, armed robbery and Boko Haram activities, sustainable development cannot thrive as these are synonymous with fear, destruction and violence which are antithetical to development in a developing country.

The Way Forward

Development must take into account the cultural experience of the people whose cause it is meant to serve. Most policies had failed because this vital ingredient had been undermined. Development becomes meaningful when it enables the people to realize their potentials, build self confidence and lead lives of dignity and fulfillment.

Acts of profligacy must be minimized. This has the potentials of redirecting resources to critical areas of need. It is ridiculous to note that a country that is in dear need of development cannot explain why it should use as much as N685billion in just eleven years of democracy to service an expensive National Assembly while other critical sector such as power, education, health, transportation, agriculture suffers serious set backs.

The challenge of insecurity cannot be glossed over. It impedes investment; divert attention from development issues and retards progress. Therefore, the challenge must be confronted with all vigor such that will encourage people to meaningfully invest and contribute their quota to national development.

It is imperative to reemphasize that the panacea to Nigeria's underdevelopment is simply good governance. It is the exercise of power by various levels of government in a manner that is effective, honest, equitable, accountable and transparent. This is often achieved through a process that is essentially free from

abuse and corruption and with due respect for the rule of law. Thus good governance is integral to development. While it requires good institutions to function, a true test is the degree to which it delivers and responds on the promises that pertains to political, economic, social and cultural rights.

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