

NIGERIA DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND ITS CHALLENGES: THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract: This work examines and x-rays the challenges that militated against the actualization of the various development plans that were initiated or launched by the Federal Government at one time or the other. Its specific objectives were to examine their challenges as well as to find out why all the development plans failed in Nigeria. It was confirmed that poverty and unemployment were still very high, the infrastructural facilities in bad shape. The recent survey confirmed that Nigeria is 158th on the development index out of 177 countries. This is a clear manifestation of the fact that the various national development plans were enveloped with different challenges that stalled their implementation or the actualization of their aims and objectives. Some of these challenges were; lack of political will, distortion of plans, corruption, poor and inadequate feasibility studies in planning and lack of comprehensive statistics. Based on the above deployable condition and perpetual bondage caused by non-implementation of National Development plan, the following recommendations were proffered; avoidance of corruption, qualified persons should be employed, while successive government should implement the projects and programmes of their predecessors.

Keywords: National Development, National Development plan, corruption, plan distortion.

Background to the study

Development planning is not new to Nigeria; it could be easily traced to the colonial era. It was first introduced by the colonial Government under the leadership of Sir, Arthur Richard in 1946, immediately after the Second World War. Okowa (1991) posits that development planning is today widely utilized all over the third world as an instrument for the accelerated development of these societies. In similar vein, Mezieobi (2003) avers that National Development is a common developmental parlance in all countries of the world, first, second, third and fourth. What is common among the nations of the world, as far as national development is concerned, is that every nation desires it coupled with the fact that it is a continuous process that has no elastic breaking point.

Deekor and Kia (2015) clearly stated that the government of Nigeria has over the years experimented on many varied developmental strategies to address problems of development to bring about the much desired economic growth. Successive governments since 1960 made several attempts to harness all her potentials through the adoption and implementation of various development programmes and plans with the aim of achieving rapid and sustained economic growth. It is important to point out that all the development plans were put together by selected experts and experienced professionals, appointed by the various governments to facilitate an all-round development of the Nation. The federal government's efforts to actualize development in all fields of human endeavour start with the first development plan of 1962-1968. This was followed by the second development plan that spanned between 1970-1974. The third development action plan was to be in existence within 1974 and 1980, while the fourth development plan was launched to cover the period between 1981-1985.

At the end of 1985, the various federal military governments that took over power did not come up with development plans, rather they introduced vision 2010 and vision 2020 as their own developmental strategies that would have enabled them to put Nigeria on the wheel of progress.

Statement of the Problem

Since Nigeria attained independence status in 1960, several development plans have been put in place to drive the development process in Nigeria. Beside the development plans, several developmental programmes, techniques including the rolling plan 1990-1999, vision 2010, vision 2020, structural adjustment programme, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) etc. were also initiated at one time or the other for the purpose of achieving National Development. It is worthy of note that all the national plans including all other economic development programmes failed to achieve their respective aims and objectives. Several reasons have been identified by scholars, foreign observers, professionals, politicians and the masses as being responsible for their colossal failure. So many analysts trace the failure of our development plans to corruption, non-implementation of the plans to the fullest, political interference or coup and counter coup d'état.

Other social commentators and scholars claimed that greater parts of the development plans were implemented but were weakened by political instability. It should be noted that in spite of the implementation of all the development plans to a reasonable extent, the key indices of human development in our country are not at all impressive; poverty is still widespread, education and health systems are in shambles and the critical factor in productive endeavour, regular power supply is unavailable. In sum, Nigeria is 158th on the development index out of 177 countries surveyed in both the 2005 and 2007/2008 UNDP Human Development Index Report (2008).

The various development plans aimed at actualizing the following at stipulated time framed reduction in unemployment, diversification of the economy, a great and dynamic economy, to develop as rapidly as possible opportunities in education, health and employment, to improve the distribution of income to maintain price stability and the value of the Nigerian Naira, development of technology etc., all these have not been realized and Nigerians are placed in deplorable condition, perpetual bondage and abysmal poverty. The researchers are specifically interested to find out why our development plans including other economic development programmes failed to actualize their aims and objectives. Despite the numerous development plans, poverty and unemployment are still very high, our roads are in bad shape, power supply is epileptic, technologically we are backward etc.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are as follows;

1. To examine the challenges that surrounded the implementation of the Nigerian Development plans.
2. To investigate why the various National Development plans failed to achieve its aims and objectives.
3. To unveil the nature and components of the Nigerian Development plans
4. To proffer solutions to the problems identified.

Conceptual Clarification

The following concepts were clarified so as to avoid all forms of ambiguities and misconception of terms:

1. **National Development:** A process of systematic transformation of the overall social, economic, political, scientific and technological life of a nation via effective, coherent, co-ordinated management system, result-oriented social mobilization strategy in which the citizens actually participate and exhibit positive attitudinal commitment in the overall reconstruction process for the improved human conditions of the people.
2. **National Development Plan:** This has to do with the strategies adopted by the third world countries including Nigeria to harness and properly manage all the resources within their disposal for the purpose of achieving socio-economic, political, cultural and technological development in their respective countries.
3. **Challenges:** This has to do with the problems hindering the implementation and actualization of the National Development plans in Nigeria.

Sustainable Development Goals and Development in Nigeria

Most writers have it that development planning in Nigeria started in 1946 with a ten year plan of development and welfare (Obikeze and Obi, 2004; Ugwu, 2009). It is also on record that this plan which was expected to run till 1956 came to an abrupt end in 1951 due to change in the constitution that introduced federalism thus the plan ran concomitantly. According to Okoli (2004), with other plans for each of the then four regions of the federation viz the West, East, North and Southern Nigeria. The plan was stymied (obstructed) due to limited financial resources, serious weaknesses in the public policy making process, and non-consultation with Nigerians as beneficiaries of the plan.

The 1951-56 plan which followed was meant to last for five years but the 1954 Littleton's Constitution made Nigeria a real federal system and the bitter struggle for dominance among nationalist leaders which resulted in the 1953 Kano riots led to the scrapping of the plan that year. Obikeze and Obi (2004) revealed that this plan was particularly different from the original one. In view of the above developments, the 1956-62 plans were introduced. However, political events unfolded dramatically and rapid reversals of earlier political stands led to the Northern members of parliament demanding government as soon as practicable. This was an aftermath of the Action Group (AG) sponsored motion seeking self-government for Nigeria in 1956 hence independence came (earlier than expected) in 1960. There was a compelling need to draw a development plan reflecting the independent status of Nigeria. The new status made the 1956-62 development plan anachronistic (obsolete) (Okoli, 2004).

First National Development Plan (1962-1968).

The first National Development Plan was from 1962-1968 and it aimed at cooperation between public and private sectors, as well as between federal and regional governments. It also aimed at high level of development which was expected to supersede the colonial plan before it; hence it required a realistic study of the financial stands of both public and private sectors. It aimed at avoiding balance of payment (BOP) crisis. Thus past plans were studied in order to project for the future. The plan emphasized agricultural, industrial, transport and manpower development.

Other objectives of the first National Development Plan according to Obikeze & Obi (2004) included achievement and maintenance of the highest possible rate of increase in the standard of living for Nigerians, it also aimed at a target saving of about 15percent of the GDP during the plan period, a GDP minimum growth rate of 4% for the economy. The plan which was expected to last for six years had a proposed total investment expenditure of about N2.132 million. The public sector investment was put at N1, 352.3 million and the remaining investment expenditure of N780 million was to be made by private sector. However, the subsequent crisis, culminating in the thirty-month Nigerian Civil War in 1967-70 punctuated the implementation of the plan. According to Osifo-Whiskey (1987), each region's list of programmes in the 1962-68 plan were the same with no plan at the centre to plan development centrally. The plan rested disproportionately on public sector's contribution to national development. Many industries however were established and this contributed to the

rise of the GDP from 5% in 1960 to 8% in 1962.

Second National Development Plan (1970-1974)

This development plan was referred to as the oil-boom development plan because it coincided with the period that Nigeria made high earnings from the sales of crude oil and allied products. As a result of the just ended civil war, the plan had the following objective as listed out by Ugwu, (2009):

- i. The reconstruction of the facilities damaged by the civil war or fallen in despair.
- ii. The rehabilitation and settlement of persons displaced by war.
- iii. The rehabilitation and resettlement of demobilized armed forces personnel.
- iv. The establishment of an efficient administrative service and an appropriate economic infrastructure, especially in the new states.
- v. The achievement of a rate of growth of per capita output sufficiently high to bring about a doubling of real income per capita head before (1975) etc.

This plan according to Egonmwan & Ibodje (2001), involved the capital expenditure of 3.2 billion naira and an anticipated overall growth rate of 7% per annum. As a result of the oil boom, however, the initial budget was increased from 3.2 billion naira to 5.3 billion naira. It is arguable that at a point, the Nigerian governing elites started the march towards economic regression as a result of fiscal and financial indiscipline.

During the 1970-74 plan periods, as Okoli (2004) explained, Nigerians were expected to fully participate in private sector which witnessed the enactment of the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree in 1972 (which was to Nigerians certain companies and increase Nigerian participation from 40% to 60% ownership). Full foreign investments were discouraged as the federal government bought shares in major commercial houses like the banks and insurance companies. A comprehensive review of the 1972 Indigenization Decree took place and its provisions and others were consolidated into Decree 3 of 1977 which came up with three schedules instead of the two under the 1972 Decree. It was discovered that the decree rather than transfer ownership and control to Nigerians, subjugated them. As a result of financial indiscipline, sundry mismanagement of resources and planning inadequacies, a country that before now embarked upon indigenizing enterprises in 1972, through 1977, commenced privatization and commercialization of those enterprises in less than twenty years. The country seems to have remained a pawn in the chess game of the strong capitalist nations and their institutions. The plan however was extended to 1975 as a result of its implementation which proved cumbersome for the bureaucrats. Among all the plans mentioned so far, this plan fulfilled its stipulated years of execution with an addition of one year.

The Third National Development Plan 1975-80.

This plan also fell within the oil boom years and according to Osifo (1987) was the largest and most ambitious of all the plans ever launched. The plans were long term in nature. The objectives were to increase in per capita income, even distribution of income, reduction in level of unemployment, increasing the supply of high level manpower, diversification of the economy, balanced development and indigenization of economic activities. The initial

total expenditure for the plan was 30 billion naira over five years but further adjustments made the figure 60 billion naira in 1980. The listed objectives further include the following:

1. Research in agriculture on both food and cash crops for domestic feeding and export and raw materials for local industries.
2. Research and development on livestock and veterinary.
3. Special agricultural development schemes.
4. Reviewing the credit requirement of Nigeria Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (NACB).
5. Installation and building of terminal plant stations etc.

This plan as Jide and Oghator (2013) stated, was intended to curb inflationary trends and it suggested the country's attainment of high development level. The search for a wider market which might be included witnessed the formation of ECOWAS as a sure strategy.

In his review of this development plan, Onah (2006) submitted that "agriculture and social development schemes (education, housing, health, welfare among others) that have direct bearing on the living condition of the rural population (constituting 70% of Nigerian population), received only 5 Percent and 11.5% respectively of the financial allocation contained in the plan". This lack of proper allocation of finances to priority areas of the economy then, showed lack of focus on the part of the leadership. Just like the 2018 budget that allotted 7.04% to education by the present administration showing great negligence to human capital development, while it voted billions of naira for the upcoming elections in 2019.

The third development plan however achieved the following:

- i. GDP grew at an average of 5% per annum.
- ii. The manufacturing sector recorded the fastest growth, averaging 18.1% per annum.
- iii. Building and construction grew at 13.9%
- iv. Government services leaped at 17.7%
- v. Other services grew at 15.7%

Most of the key projects that were anticipated as foundation for self-sustainability and dynamic growth of the economy as Ibietan and Oghator (2013) gathered were not completed or could not take off. Examples are the Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Complex, Aladja Direct Steel Reduction Plant, The Eleme Petrochemical Complex, Oku- Iboku Newsprint Paper Mill and the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Plant at Bonny.

The Fourth National Development Plan 1981-1985.

This development plan reaffirmed long term National objective of the proceeding plan. Ijaiya and Usman (2000) added that the plan was launched simply to consolidate the third national development plan....with much more commitment to petroleum resources". The industrial policy objectives of this plan were:

- ✓ Promotion of export oriented industries
- ✓ Enhancement of local value-added through the development of small and medium

scale industries

- ✓ Local sourcing of inputs
- ✓ Improving the efficiency of government-owned enterprises.
- ✓ Acquisition of technological skills.
- ✓ Increasing real income for all.
- ✓ Nigerian Reduction in unemployment.
- ✓ Power generation and supply (which Nigerian government is still battling with today) etc.

The cost of this plan was 82 billion naira. Out of this figure, the public sector was to account for 70.5 billion naira while the share of the private sector was 11.5 billion. The planned investment was expected to generate an annual GDP growth of 7.2%. The manufacturing sector had a projected average growth rate of 15% for the plan period. The rate of growth was supposed to make a significant increase in the standard of living of the average citizen at the end of the plan period. Out of all these plans ever launched since independence, the fourth plan according to Egonmwan & Ibodje (2001) was most ambitious in term of size of the anticipated investment programme and it turned out to be the least successful in term of achievement.

The fourth development plan was characterized with huge debt servicing, which resulted from various foreign loans obtained in the previous years, increased import bills in the midst of drastic fall in crude oil export revenue. These factors limited the scope of the objectives. This plan was first to be made under democratic rules and was very unique in that it involved the participation of the local governments.

The performance of the plan however, as economic indicators revealed negative growth in major sectors of the economy in 1985. Its achievement however included the commissioning of the Oku Iboku Newspaper project, Egbin Power Station, Akure Airport, 87 telephone exchanges all over Nigeria, and an increase in subscriber base from 188,000 in 1981 to 297,000 in 1985, increase in educational enrolment at all levels, improvement in healthcare delivery, construction of thousands of kilometers of federal highways and rehabilitation/construction of state roads, implementation of Agricultural Development Program (ADP) in seventeen out of the nineteen states of the federation and others captured by Onah (2006) and Egonmwan and Ibodje (2001). The full expectations of the citizenry were far from being met though the plans were bogus and expectations higher than what achievements were recorded.

Challenges of National Development plans in Nigeria

Since independence status was attained in 1960, Nigeria had embarked or launched several National Development plans so as to achieve all round development. Unfortunately, the development plan was unable to achieve their aims to the fullest. Therefore, the following challenges have been identified as some of the factors that militated against the full actualization of the National Development plans.

- 1. Plans distortion:** It has been observed that all the development plans that were launched were at one time or the other distorted. The first development plan was distorted by the coup and counter coup of 1966. The emergence of the Nigerian Civil War in 1967 led to the disorganization and total collapse of the first development plan in Nigeria. Even some of the things that were put in place were later destroyed by the war. Dean (1972) posits that one major error which was frequently permitted was that entirely new and unrelated projects were readily substituted for the original programmes. Plan distortion was not only peculiar to the first national development plan but affected all the development plans that were launched in the post-independence era.
- 2. Political instability and discontinuity of programmes:** The 1960s, 1970s and 1980s were characterized by military coups and change of governments in Nigeria. These were the periods when these national development plans were launched. The political atmosphere was unstable and successive administrations were not interested to continue or implement projects that were initiated by their predecessors. The period in question, witnessed the following military coups: January 15th, 1966; July 29th, 1966, 1975; February 13th, 1976, return to civilian administration on 1st October, 1979, Military coup of 31st of December, 1983 and military coup in 1985. It is pertinent to note that these military coups and counter coups as well as change of government to civilian administration truncated the implementation of all the development plans in Nigeria (Okoli and Onah, 2002). Nigerian government makes a lot of promises but cannot deliver on their promises. They are not committed enough in continuing and completing plans put in place already by their predecessors.
- 3. Lack of political will:** A careful examination and analysis of development plans indicated that the political actors that were at the helms of affairs at one time or the other did not have the political will to implement the development plans. According to Luke (2008), implementing a strategic plan for a nation is like going to war. He further buttressed by saying that you are like someone who has a plan at hand. A national strategic plan and war have something in common. Both have the capacity to change the face of the nation positively or negatively. A nation, which declares war without the political will to prosecute it, will lose. Similarly you cannot set the full benefits of a strategic plan for a country without political will to implement it.
The leaders of Nigeria failed to show commitment and enthusiasm towards the implementation of the various development plans. They were all governed by selfish interests and how to amass the wealth of the nation at the detriment of the poor masses.
- 4. Poor or inadequate feasibility studies in planning and lack of comprehensive statistics** are responsible for the failure of development plans in Nigeria (Ibetan and Oghator, 2013). Nigeria planners did not carry out intensive feasibility studies and comprehensive statistics about the cost of the project before including them in the development plans. This resulted to littering the nation with uncompleted and abandoned projects.
- 5. Corruption:** Corruption is the most challenging problem that has eaten deep into the bone-marrow of Nigerian leaders. The funds that would have been used for the implementation of the development plans have been mismanaged and converted into personal bank accounts and coffers. Nigeria shares the company of the most corrupt

countries in the world today (The Guardian, December 25th, 2009). Deekor and Kia (2015) put it succinctly that the country is 157th among the 170 countries in contrast to Ghana which is number 70 in ascending order among the most corrupt countries in the world. Nahu (2008), at launching of the “Fix Nigeria” initiative in Abuja disclosed that about 65 trillion (£220 billion) has been stolen by the past 40 years of independence. He regretfully stated that the money could have recreated the beauty and glory of Western Europe six times all over (Guardian, September 22, 2008).

The Way Forward

There is nothing more powerful than an idea that is presented to the people in a consistent and systematic manner by the leader or leaders. Change is driven by ideology, by this we mean the presumption of an idea to be attained in the future supported by strategies and policies on how to achieve these goals (Deekor and Kia, 2015). It has been observed that most of the military leaders and civilian administrators really lacked the political will to transform the fortune of the nation. This manifested in their lukewarm approaches toward the development of the nation.

Therefore, Nigerian should undermine religious affiliation, ethnicity, nepotism, political affiliation and search for somebody who is upright, committed and has the capacity to manage both human and material resources of the nation.

Another important factor to be considered is that more qualified persons should be appointed to do the jobs he is best suited for. A round peg should be placed in a round hole. It is unfortunate that most of the appointments and employments in Nigeria are done based on ethnicity, religious affiliation and political affiliation. This should be avoided because it is greatly responsible for our stagnation and non-implementation of development plans.

National development efforts in Nigeria are inclined largely towards economic development and/or materials development to the near total exclusion of attitudinal development which in our invaluable dimension of national development (Mesiobi, 2013). In similar vein, Kamonideen (2008) posits that;

“There is no better solution to the many problems militating against the development of Nigeria and its proposed transformation to the top 20 economics than attitudinal change, change to do the right thing and ignore the wrong thing”.

Another way forward is that Nigerian leaders must avoid corruption and focus on the development of the nation, by properly harnessing the abundant human and material resources for the production of goods that will be beneficial to the Nation. The high level of corruption exhibited by the leaders of Nigeria left Nigeria in devastating condition, while the developed nations benefited from the loots, as the funds are invested to create jobs in their countries. The Nigerian leaders paid lip-services to corruption, and are only hunting political

opponents. The moment a political opponent decamps to the ruling party, his sins and corrupt practices are forgotten. This ought to be stopped if we want to move forward.

Development plan or a rolling plan should not be seen as the property of a leader or a political party. A development plan must be seen as the handbook of the nation that will take us to the promise land. Therefore, successive government ought to work towards its implementation; projects should be properly and adequately monitored and evaluated so as to enhance transparency and accountability. This will certainly go a long way to enhance completion of projects. In addition, funds should be released for the implementation of projects as at when due and the milestone completed should be assessed by experts based on how much that was released.

Conclusion

Presently, Nigerian development and the actualization of the National Development plans have been hindered by bad leadership. Our leaders are corrupt and lack the political will to implement development plans that would have placed us among the first 20 economics in the world. Nigeria is found among the first corrupt and poor nations of the world because of our inability to properly implement development plans. We need to have a change in attitude and do the right thing at the right time.

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