

SUSTAINABLE GOVERNANCE, CITIZENSHIP AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Development is fundamental for a country to thrive and advance. When a nation can guarantee its people a high standard of living, we say that it is developed. Despite having vast human, material, and natural resources at her disposal, Nigeria has been struggling with development issues for over fifty years. The paper addressed issues that bothered national development as well as solutions for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Sustainability, Governance, Citizenship, National Development

Introduction

Nigeria has embarked on a series of National Development plans and visions in her endless efforts to search for appropriate development strategies since independence. It is worrisome that these development plans and visions have failed to achieve their expected objectives. This is evident from widespread poverty, dilapidated infrastructure, massive unemployment, high incidence of diseases, and excessive debt burden among others.

The gap between the developed and the developing countries is not static or narrow but is continually widening. A large majority of the world's population in developing world lives in a state of poverty. The problems of the urban population, rural stagnation, unemployment, and growing inequalities continue to faceless developed countries, such as Nigeria. Hopes of accelerated development dwindled. This gloomy situation is of great concern to stakeholders and the concerned citizenry. Nigeria has not been able to engender meaningful development despite its huge resources endowment. This has greatly affected her quest to improve the quality of life of

her citizens. Poverty, unemployment, and starvation still pervade the nook and cranny of the country.

Development is essential and critical to the growth and sustenance of any country. To successfully enhance meaningful development, effective strategies must evolve.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It could also be construed as a global responsibility and solidarity between generations, between women and men, and between different cultures and countries. It is about safeguarding and efficient use of existing natural resources. Investment in the management of human, social, and physiological resources is also a crucial part of sustainable development.

The basic principles underlying sustainability can be separated into social, economic, and ecological dimensions. Economic growth is perceived as a requirement for development. No country can achieve sustainable economic growth if the environment is worsened if the prosperity is not fairly distributed and if growth of the human resources has not taken place. Therefore the economic dimension means that economic growth shall carry on with: first, respect taken for the environment, second, growth of the people's health and education and third, a fair distribution of prosperity. The social dimension points out that the importance of resources, power, and influence are fairly distributed and that people can feel security and can participate. The social dimension is therefore a requirement for economic growth. The environmental dimension means that considerations are taken for social and economic development. These three dimensions are

integrated as they are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The implication of this is that sustainable development to a large extent is about politics (Tilbury & Wortman, 2004).

Governance

Governance is the traditions and institutions that determine how authority is exercised in a particular country. This includes; the process by which governments are selected, held accountable, monitored, and replaced; the capacity of governments to manage resources efficiently and formulate, implement, and enforce sound policies and regulations; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them. A wide variety of cross-country indicators shed light on the various dimensions of governance.

Moreover, stakeholders' perceptions of the quality of governance—as reflected in these qualitative ratings—matter at least as much as objective data (from official statistics) and often accurately reflect actual outcomes. For instance, property rights are legally guaranteed in virtually all countries. Yet effective enforcement of those rights by the courts varies widely. When enterprises perceive that courts do not enforce these rights, the enterprises will look for other less efficient ways of enforcing contracts.

National Development

National, according to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, refers to a phenomenon that embraces a whole nation. National development therefore can be described as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation. This is best achieved through development planning, which can be described as the country's collection of strategies mapped out by the government.

There are a series of development plans in Nigeria. Nigeria is permanently hunted by the specter of development. It's been eighty-three years of independence rolling by daily in search of development. The myth of growth and development is so entrenched that the country's history passes for the history of development strategies and growth models from colonial times up to date. No term has been in constant flux as development.

Two years after independence, the first National Development Plan policy was formulated between 1962 and 1968 with the objectives of developing opportunities in health, education, and employment and improving access to these opportunities. This plan failed because about fifty percent of the resources needed to finance the plan came from external sources, and only fourteen percent of the external finance was received (Ogwumike, 1995). Another plan between 1981 and 1985 recognized the role of social services, health services, etc. The plan was aimed at bringing about improvement in the living conditions of the people. The specific objectives were: an increase in the real income of the average citizen, a more even distribution of income among individuals and socio-economic groups, increased dependence on the country's material and human resources, a reduction in the level of unemployment and underemployment (Ogwumike, 1995).

During these periods, Nigeria's enormous oil wealth was not invested to build a viable industrial base for the country and for launching an agrarian revolution to liquidate mass poverty. For instance, the Green Revolution Programme that replaced Operation Feed the Nation failed to generate enough food for the masses. In the recent past, various strategies for development have also been tried with little or no result; among these were the structural adjustment program (SAP), Vision 2010, national economic empowerment and development strategy (NEEDS), creation of development centers. Currently, the point agenda of the immediate past administration with vision 2020 without any clear methodological approach towards achieving them. It is obvious that the current results so far are not what development connotes.

Strategies for National Development

The beauty of any development plan is the faithful implementation of such a plan, and its success lies with the implementers. Most of the past development plans failed as a result of implementation problems and a lack of committed leadership. Based on this fact, new development policies and strategies are currently in place as alternative strategies for development, such as the Seven Points Agenda, Vision 2020, etc. These policies and vision appear to be all-embracing but they are not sacrosanct in their totality.

There is a need for Nigeria to revamp the agricultural sector; this sector was instrumental in the development of other countries like Japan and Israel. Agriculture used to be the mainstay of Nigeria's economy but the discovery of crude oil succeeded in putting agriculture into a state of oblivion.

Human resources development is also a sine qua non to Nigeria's national development; this was demonstrated in Japan and Korea (Lawal et al., 1976). Development depends very much on human knowledge and skills. This must be such that a high quality of education and training is achieved for a large majority at a reasonable price and the context and quality of such education and training should be relevant and adequate to the country's development needs.

Literature on development stresses the axiom that it is the people who develop and that unless there are large numbers of suitably qualified people, development cannot take place. There is a need for attitudinal change. Nigerians must change their pessimistic attitude towards development. The idea or belief that "things cannot work in Nigeria or Nigerian factor" should be discouraged. Real development is achieved through internal activities rather than from external influences. Development is seen as a process generated within a society by forces propagated and invigorated by the actual members of that society. It is believed that true development can neither be started nor sustained by outsiders. Although, no country can develop in isolation, but the heavy emphasis should not be placed on foreign resources for the country's development.

Importantly, citizenship should be promoted over indigeneity to achieve cooperation and participation of all communities in the development process. Omotoso (2008) noted that the 1999 constitution is directly or indirectly promoting indigeneity in the country. For example, section 318(1) of paragraph (IV) supports indigeneity. The constitution sets parameters for indigenes and non-indigenes. It equally gives legal bases to various discriminatory policies that actively promote indigeneity, contrary to some sections that argue against discrimination. This is very contradictory. Leadership in Nigeria must behave in a way to inculcate the spirit of patriotism in the minds of

the people so that they will be ready to stand with the government in its development efforts.

When Nigerians see themselves as one and not as belonging to one section of the country as portrayed presently, the urge to develop Nigeria will be germinated and sustained.

Additionally, the need to reform the electoral process is imperative for socio-economic and political development. Electoral fraud is one of the banes of Nigeria's development. The role of leadership in development cannot be overemphasized, all efforts towards development must be coordinated and directed by the leaders, therefore, the leaders must be development-conscious, have a genuine interest in development, and have the political will to propel such development. The leaders must also have the cooperation of the people, because, it is the people that develop a nation. Honestly, the aforementioned ingredients cannot be possible without a legitimized mandate for the leaders by the people. When a leader assumes office through electoral fraud, such a leader is bound to fail in his effort to generate meaningful development. This is because such illegitimate leaders tend to display characters that repress development such as; selfishness, corruption, pride, thuggery, and inefficiency also, there is apathy and natural detachment to development plans by the people as they did not see such emerging leaders as the products of their consent through voting. Based on the foregoing, the electoral process should be reformed in such a way that nobody assumes power (political) through crook or fraudulent means. The process should be made open, free, fair, and competitive. All legal battles preceding the elections must be concluded before any swearing-in. This, it is believed, will create a genuine environment conducive to development. Also, a development plan should not be exclusively regarded as an economic issue it should be seen as a holistic and encompassing national issue that cuts across economic, social, political, and psychological aspects of human endeavour.

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