

SDGs Monitor

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**We're
Fast-tracking
SDGs
Implementation
In Nigeria**

— Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire



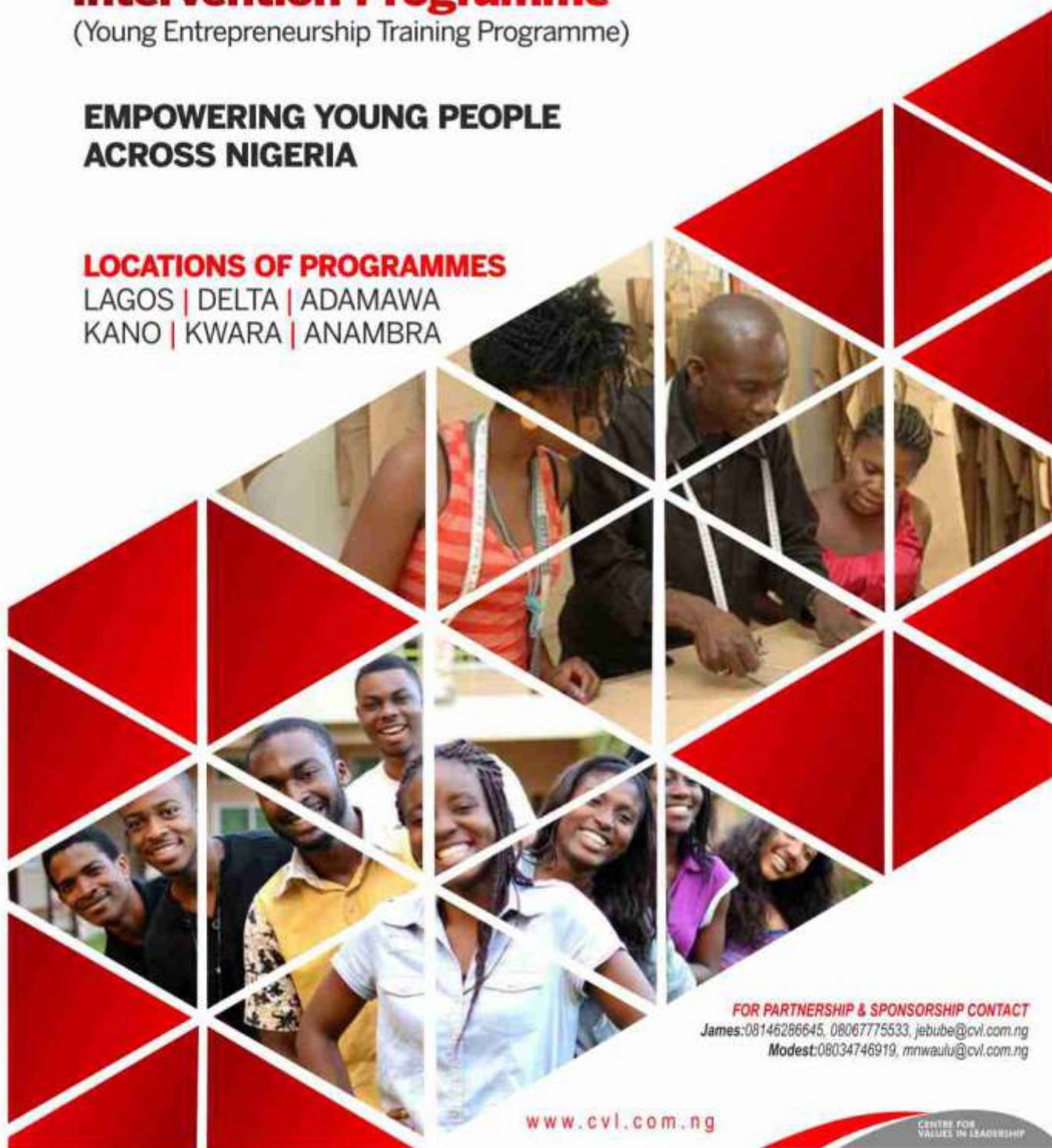
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Announcing SDGs Monitor

In this maiden issue of SDGs Monitor, we assess Nigeria's readiness and preparation for implementing the SDGs in general. In particular, we explore the status of seven selected SDGs whose implementation we intend to follow closely in the first four issues of SDGs Monitor. The selected SDGs are:

- No Poverty (SDG#1)
- Quality Education (SDG#4)
- Gender Equality (SDG#5)
- Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG#8)
- Reduced Inequality (SDG#10)
- Climate Action (SDG #13)
- Peace, Justice and Strong Institution (SDG#16)

We also showcase our very first star interview, a feature that will constitute a prominent and regular slice of the SDGs Monitor Magazine. The trailblazer presented is Princess Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire, former Deputy-Governor of the great Lagos State during the administration of Babatunde Fashola, who is currently the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Team SDGs Monitor will research and produce an engaging quarterly publication that zealously investigates and displays what the government is doing to implement the SDGs in Nigeria. We will be beaming our light on Federal and State governments, and to reach into some of the often unseen corners, but always in a responsible and objective manner. We hope that you will find so much to enjoy and to inform you in every issue.

Thank you for your anticipated support.

Ebere Onwudiwe
Publisher & Editorial Director
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We're Fast-tracking SDGs Implementation in Nigeria

— Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire

PRINCESS Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire, Senior Special Assistant to the President on Sustainable Development Goals (SSAP-SDGs) is a thoroughbred administrator, social worker and politician imbued with the passion for dedicated service to humanity. Before her appointment as SSAP-SDGs in 2016, she had served diligently as Deputy Governor of Lagos State between the 2011 and 2015. She had also served as Commissioner for Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation in Lagos State and effectively used her position to tackle an array of issues under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that included slashing poverty, hunger, disease and gender inequality.

Quietly focused and hardworking, Orelope-Adefulire is building partnerships with stakeholders as her office coordinates the implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria. In this exclusive interview with SDGs Monitor, she provides an insight into the implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria, especially the plans being implemented to ensure that the largest black nation achieves the SDGs targets by 2030. **Excerpts:**

On September 25, 2015, the United Nations adopted the 17 global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). How would you appraise the implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria by the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari?

It is important to situate the implementation of the SDGs within the context of the strong political will at the highest level of government. You will recall that His Excellency the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Federal Republic of Nigeria joined other Heads of State and Government at the UN Summit to adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda in New York in 2015 to affirm the SDGs Declaration. This action was a strong show of the President's commitment to deploy the SDGs in a timely and effective way.

This commitment has been backed by action as Government is making concerted efforts to establish the policy, institutional and financial frameworks needed for the successful implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria. His Excellency the President appointed me as the Senior Special Assistant on SDGs, designating my Office to coordinate the implementation of the SDGs across Nigeria.

A quick appraisal shows that there is substantial progress with SDGs implementation in Nigeria. We have made progress in the area of tracking and reporting the SDGs by compiling and disseminating the Millennium



Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire

Development Goals (MDGs) End-Point Report that details the various key implementation milestones and achievements, notable policy drivers, main challenges and key lessons learnt at both the national and sub-national levels during the implementation of the MDGs. We have also concluded a SDGs Data Mapping which is a mapping of data requirements for SDGs tracking and reporting against the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and highlights a data supply framework which assigns responsibility to various MDAs, thus holding them accountable for data production. MDAs will be signing a 'Data Bond' to ensure they commit to the supply of

In terms of the strategy for implementation, we have developed a Country Transition Strategy from MDGs to SDGs, together with an Action Plan, which proposes key strategic options that best support effective transitioning and implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria, structured around eight thematic areas that are at the heart of the SDGs

reliable administrative and other types of data in a timely and efficient way.

Importantly, we have determined Baseline SDGs Statistics for Nigeria, using a combination of the System of Administrative Statistics, Surveys and other methods. This output will help us benchmark SDGs progress as Nigeria implements the Agenda.

In terms of the strategy for implementation, we have developed a Country Transition Strategy from MDGs to SDGs, together with an Action Plan, which proposes key strategic options that best support effective transitioning and implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria, structured around eight thematic areas that are at the heart of the SDGs. The Strategy and Action Plan currently guide the SDGs implementation process in Nigeria.

In cognizance of the need to ensure that the SDGs are adequately mainstreamed and integrated into Nigeria's medium and long-term National and State Development Plans, the SDGs Office is working with diverse stakeholders. A number of SDGs have been mainstreamed into the National Economic Recovery and Growth Plan recently launched by the President. To date,

a number of State Governments have also completed the process of integrating the SDGs into their long and medium-term plans.

There is a need for citizens' engagement for the successful implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria. As a result, high-level advocacy and sensitization activities have been undertaken in various parts of the country and with various stakeholders. These include visits to state governments and other stakeholders, including lawmakers, traditional institutions, the

academia, youth, civil society, faith-based organizations, vulnerable population groups and the organized private sector in all the six geo-political zones.

The SDGs Office is also collaborating with the National Youth Service Corps and the National Orientation Agency to improve sensitization and advocacy by leveraging the structures and wide reach of these agencies in the 774 Local Government Areas across the 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Additionally, each of the SDGs has been translated into the main local languages as part of the sensitization and advocacy efforts.

These are just a few of early efforts by this Administration targeted at ensuring that the implementation of the SDGs is successful.

How much has been allocated to the SDGs in the 2017 budget and how does your office intend to ensure that it is effectively utilized to attain the goals encapsulated in the SDGs?

We are making efforts to ensure that adequate resources are mobilized for the implementation of the SDGs in

Nigeria. As you are aware, a key aspect to the attainment of the SDGs is the deployment of a robust financing framework as laid out in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA), the outcome of the third International Conference on Financing Development. The AAAA stipulates that Official Development Assistance (ODA) should complement other funding sources such as Domestic Resource Mobilization, Foreign Direct Investment, Corporate Social Responsibility and other innovative sources of financing. In mobilizing resources locally, we have made deliberate efforts to ensure that adequate budgeting is dedicated for SDGs implementation. We are positive that the 2017 Budget, still being discussed at the National Assembly, will contain substantial sums for SDGs activities.

Poverty reduction is goal number one of the SDGs. How would you rate the efforts of Nigeria in achieving the target of eradicating poverty by 2030?

The multi-dimensional nature of poverty requires that cross-sectorial actions and synergies be built to improve the lives of Nigerians. It is my considered view that one of the best ways to significantly reduce poverty is to galvanize multiple stakeholders working in different sectors to pool resources for the fight against poverty. In this regard, I refer to the complementarity that the efforts of various actors can have on one another. For instance, the recent improvement in the Nigerian economy was due mainly to growth in non-oil sectors like agriculture. As you are aware, this Administration recently laid significant emphasis on diversification of the economy away from oil. I should like to state, however, that growth in one sector ought to complement growth in another. The improvement in GDP occasioned by agriculture will be better if the agricultural value chain is improved. The agriculture value chain will not improve if other sectors of the economy such as energy, roads and other infrastructure are not improved.

This Administration is therefore working conscientiously to ensure that all the critical sectors work together for national development and poverty eradication. This is evidenced in the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan that highlights the need to ensure that areas such as agriculture and food security, energy, other infrastructure, and industry are integrated in a stable and predictable macroeconomic environment.

To answer your question directly, therefore, I would like to assert that we are making progress in the right direction to tackle poverty as we are addressing the essential ingredients needed for success. Success will be contingent on focus and sustained efforts.

Could you give us some insight into the implementation of some the social interventions of the administration of President Buhari that are aimed at reducing poverty?

Prior to the inception of this Administration, the implementation of social interventions took mostly a fragmented uncoordinated approach with inadequate monitoring and evaluation frameworks. That has since changed in that His Excellency the President established a Social Investment Office with an annual budget of N500 billion to ensure that Government's efforts reaches the people in a timely manner. The social investment programmes are designed to ensure social





protection for the core poor and reduce inequality among the Nigerian populace. The scheme is already being implemented with particular focus at the sub-national levels. A National Social Safety Net Coordination office coordinates and ensures a uniform reporting platform, Monitoring and Evaluation as well as a suitable payment system for the cash transfers. In order to reach those who are actually in need, a community-based targeting approach has been adopted in building up a National Social Register that will identify the poor and vulnerable population groups.

There are five schemes under the Social Investment Programme, namely:

- N-power for job creation initiatives for teachers, artisans which targets 500,000 graduates and 100,000 non-graduates.
- A Home Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSF) which is a free school feeding scheme for primary school pupils across the country targeting 5.5 million primary school pupils in the first instance.
- A Cash Transfer Scheme with transfer of N5,000 monthly directly to 1 million caregivers in targeted poor and vulnerable households.
- An Enterprise & Empowerment Programme for financial inclusion and access to credit for market women cooperatives, traders, farmers, and the youths which targets 1.66 million beneficiaries.
- We also have a STEM Bursary Programme, which is a form of financial support for tertiary students studying Education, Science and Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

Insurgency has worsened poverty among the people of the North-east with many living in the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps. What is government's plan to reduce the level of poverty there?

There is a need to first be thankful that peace has returned to the North-east. Peace is an enabler of development. As you are aware, previous Human Development Reports clearly established the link between poverty and conflicts providing empirical evidence that

showed that conflict-ridden societies are the least developed in the world. Government is cognizant of these facts and is mobilizing stakeholders for the necessary support needed to reduce the poverty level in Nigeria's North-east.

The Presidential Initiative for the North East (PINE) is one of the major responses of Government not only to the poverty but as well as to several other challenges facing the North-east.

PINE details the initiatives, strategies, frameworks that will enhance the long-term economic reconstruction and redevelopment of the North-east. It is an intervention designed specifically to mobilize resources to revitalize the economies of the North eastern states of Nigeria. It targets infrastructural development, agricultural revitalization, health sector reforms, educational transformation, job creation for women and youth, good governance and peace, among others.

While PINE has been well designed and will make the much-needed impact when fully implemented, it is important that all stakeholders work together to improve the lives of citizens who have been devastated in the region.

Recently, the Senate passed a Bill for an act for the establishment of the National Poverty Eradication Commission (NAPEC)? Do you think that the establishment of such a commission will tackle the high rate of poverty in Nigeria?

Addressing the challenges that poverty presents requires that multiple stakeholders work in synergy. As highlighted earlier, no single agency of Government can single-handedly eradicate poverty. The establishment of the National Poverty Eradication Commission will contribute to the efforts to tackle poverty. There is, however, a need to ensure that programmes speak to one another and that proper coordination is put in place to obviate project duplication.

What gives you the confidence that the Buhari administration has demonstrated strong political will

We place emphasis on gender equality because the linkage among gender, poverty and education is well known

towards implementing the SDGs?

Earlier on, I highlighted the efforts of Government aimed at ensuring the successful rollout of the SDGs in Nigeria. This Government has indeed shown strong political commitment to the SDGs. Apart from establishing the policy, institutional and financial arrangements for the implementation of the SDGs, the Administration is working assiduously to ensure that the SDGs do not just remain a mere policy framework that do not have impact on the people. Emphasis is being placed on the need to ensure that policy translates to action on the ground. This is being done by working with different stakeholders to ensure that best practices are taken to scale.

To what extent has the current economic recession in Nigeria and its attendant dwindling revenue

generation from oil impacted negatively on the implementation of the SDGs, particularly in the areas of poverty reduction, gender equality and quality education?

Oil revenues fund development activities in Nigeria and as such, slower progress towards targets has been recorded in the drive to attain gender equality, poverty reduction and quality education. We are therefore glad that the economy is recovering and have begun the process of advocating that gender-responsive budgeting

This Administration is therefore working conscientiously to ensure that all the critical sectors work together for national development and poverty eradication

be accorded priority of place. We place emphasis on gender equality because the linkage among gender, poverty and education is well known. We are cautious to target women in our activities since they are disproportionately affected by poverty and poor access to quality education, health services and other social goods.

Can you tell us something about how your office is working with other government agencies to pursue critical goals of SDGs such as Climate Action, Gender Equality, Poverty Reduction and Quality Education?

The Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on SDGs was established with a clear mandate to coordinate the implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria. I am, however, cognizant of the need to build partnerships to successfully implement the Agenda as no single agency of Government can independently deploy the SDGs.

As such, we nurture our relationship with sister agencies by working with Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to pool resources for SDGs interventions. We also have a vertical relationship with State and Local Governments to ensure that the SDGs count at the grassroots.

An Inter-Ministerial Committee on the SDGs has since been inaugurated to coordinate SDGs implementation efforts of Federal MDAs. In addition, a Coordination Compact setting out the operational guidelines to guide the activities of the MDAs was developed and disseminated at the inaugural meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on SDGs. There are also plans to reconstitute the Presidential Committee on the Assessment and Monitoring of the SDGs, made up of one Executive Governor per geo-political zone, representatives of International Development Partners, Civil Society, and Ministers from line MDAs, amongst others. The Committee sits at the apex of the SDGs Monitoring and Evaluation system in Nigeria and is chaired by His Excellency, Mr. President.

At the sub-national level, the Conditional Grants Scheme (CGS) is being used to incentivize the domestication of the SDGs - a global development mechanism - at the local level. Currently, the CGS manual

is being reviewed to better guide the relationship among the Federal, State and Local Governments in this unique counterpart contributory arrangement.

The collaboration between the SDGs Office and other arms and tiers of Government ensures that high impact interventions in the social, economic and environmental aspects of development get delivered to our people.

How is the government partnering with the private sector in achieving the targets of the SDGs?

The role of the private sector in driving economic growth cannot be overemphasized. Business creates jobs, generates tax revenues and provides the engine that drives development. The SDGs explicitly acknowledge the interconnectedness of the prosperity of business, a flourishing society and the health of the environment.

As a result of the importance of the role of the Private Sector in the successful implementation of the SDGs, a National Framework and Strategy for Private Sector Engagement on the SDGs has been drafted. The Strategy underscores the imperative of leveraging the vast resources and efficiencies resident in the Private Sector for the implementation of the SDGs. A Private Sector Advisory Group (PSAG) comprising of businesses across main SDGs sectors has been constituted and was inaugurated about two months ago by His Excellency, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, SAN, GCON, Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

What are the prospects of SDGs implementation in the years ahead? Specifically, what plans are in place to ensure that Nigeria achieves the SDGs by 2030?

I am positive that the implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria will gain the required traction to improve the lives of our people as envisaged. A number of activities have been lined up to ensure that we deliver results as planned.

Government is deploying the Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) tool in order to rapidly scale up the implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria at both Federal and State levels. This will be preceded by a Rapid Integration Assessment (RIA) to assess the extent of SDGs integration across the nation.

Working in collaboration with International Development Partners, MDAs, sub-national governments, the SDGs Office has commenced the process of conducting a SDGs Needs Assessment and Costing exercise.

In addition, through a consultative process, Government is currently preparing the Nigeria National Voluntary Report (NVR) to be presented at the 2017 High Level Political Forum. This is to meet up with obligations to periodically track and report on SDGs implementation in Nigeria.

The SDGs Office is working with the National Bureau of Statistics to ensure that all the Ministers of SDGs line MDAs sign a 'Data Bond' that will commit them to produce SDGs data needed for the follow up and reporting on SDGs.

The SDGs Office is also developing a Communications Strategy as part of its advocacy efforts aimed at ensuring that many more Nigerians are aware of the SDGs and their roles in the implementation process. ■



Tracking the Progress of Nigeria's Poverty Reduction Strategy

ERADICATING poverty in all its forms remains one of the greatest challenges facing humanity. While the number of people living in extreme poverty has dropped by more than half – from 1.9 billion in 1990, to 836 million in 2015 – too many are still struggling for the most basic human needs.

Globally, more than 800 million people are living on less than \$1.25 a day, with many lacking access to adequate food, clean drinking water and proper sanitation. Compared to the rest of the world, the poverty crisis is worse in African countries, including Nigeria, the most populous black nation, where a significant proportion of the poor are chronically poor. Concerned at global poverty, world leaders came together at the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGAS) in New York, and on the 25th of September 2015, adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with “No Poverty” as Goal number one.

The basic target of SDG1 is to eradicate all forms of poverty by 2030 and to move the world onto a sustainable development path while ensuring that no one is left behind. This involves focusing on those living in vulnerable situations, increasing access to basic resources and services, and supporting communities affected by conflict and climate-related disasters.

President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria was one of the leaders who endorsed the global agenda for poverty eradication. He affirmed that his government would provide support for SDGs to succeed in Nigeria, since the SDGs were in tandem with the “Positive Change” mantra of his administration. He pledged to redeem his key campaign promise of lifting millions of Nigerians out of poverty through massive social interventions:

“Nigeria will, therefore, continue to leverage on the platform of the Change Agenda of my administration to vigorously pursue the implementation of the SDGs so as to lift our citizens out of poverty and deprivation while at the same time ensuring sound management of our environmental resources.”

To demonstrate his administration's commitment towards poverty reduction and effective implementation of the SDGs, President Buhari appointed a seasoned administrator and former Deputy Governor of Lagos State, Princess Adejoke Orellope-Adefulire as his Senior Special Assistant on SDGs. Orellope-Adefulire had served as Commissioner for Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation in Lagos State in 2000, when she worked to tackle an array of issues under the Millennium



President Muhammadu Buhari

Development Goals (MDGs) that included slashing poverty, hunger and disease, redressing gender inequality, and increasing access to water and sanitation.

It should be noted that it was the failure of countries such as Nigeria to attain meaningful progress in poverty reduction through the MDGs that led to the adoption of the 17 SDGs including “No Poverty.”

Transition from MDG1 to SDG1: Present and past poverty alleviation measures

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted in September 2000 aimed to eradicate extreme hunger and poverty in the 189 member-countries of the United Nations by 2015. In essence, fighting poverty was cardinal to the MDGs, which represented an attempt to combat poverty through a global partnership for development, and was seen as the key to Nigeria's escape from the poverty trap. As a member of the United Nations, Nigeria sought to key into the implementation of the MDGs by formulating poverty alleviation programmes.

However, even before the adoption of the MDGs, successive governments in Nigeria had designed different interventionist programmes in reaction to the horrendous poverty crisis in the country. Indeed, measures to combat poverty and promote development in the country started from the beginning of Nigeria's statehood. Experts have categorised the poverty alleviation interventions in Nigeria into the pre-Structural Adjustment Programme (Pre-SAP) era and the SAP/post-SAP era. The SAP was introduced in 1986 by the military administration of General Ibrahim Babangida to address the worsening socio-economic situation which had increased the level of poverty in the country.

The policies of the Pre-SAP era, which were essentially ad hoc, included Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), the Green Revolution, the National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA), River Basin Development Authorities (RBDA), the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP), and Rural Electrification Schemes (RES).

Governments also made efforts to fight poverty during the SAP/Post-SAP era, with programmes which included the Directorate of Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI), the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), the Better Life Programme (BLP), the People's Bank of Nigeria (PBN), the Family Support Programme (FSP) and the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP).

Despite these anti-poverty measures, poverty continued to increase, thus exposing the ineffectiveness of the strategies and programmes.

With the return to civilian rule and the inauguration of Nigeria's Fourth Republic in 1999, the new Obasanjo administration introduced its Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) as an interim anti-poverty measure designed to alleviate poverty by providing direct jobs to 200,000 unemployed people.

Despite PAP, the incidence of poverty in Nigeria remained high. Recognising PAP's ineffectiveness, the government introduced the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in 2001. The programme was structured to integrate four sectorial schemes, namely the Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), the Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS), the Social Welfare Scheme (SOWESS) and the Natural Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS).

During this period, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) was introduced as a policy to eradicate poverty and bring about sustainable development. NEEDS was a national framework of action, which had its equivalent at the state and local government levels, namely the State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (SEEDS) and the Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (LEEDS). The implementation was done through the collaboration and coordination among the federal and state governments, donor agencies, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders. As a home-grown strategy, NEEDS has been described as the Nigerian version of the MDGs.

However, the poverty reduction measures of the Obasanjo administration did not quite alleviate poverty. According to National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) figures for 2004, 54 percent of Nigerians lived below the relative poverty line of 2/3 of per capita households' expenditure, while 22 percent lived below the extreme relative poverty line of 1/3 of per capita households' expenditure.

Nigeria began to find its rhythm in the implementation of the MDGs from 2005. That was the year in which it successfully negotiated debt relief from the Paris Club. This enabled the country to increase and target public investment in pro-poor interventions aimed at achieving the MDGs. In addition, the Presidential Committee on the Assessment and Monitoring of the MDGs and the Office of the Special Assistant to the President on MDGs (OSSAP-

MDGs) were established to guide the use of the Debt Relief Gains in the execution of pro-poor programmes and projects.

Upon taking office in 2007, President Umaru Yar'Adua sought to improve on the anti-poverty measures of the previous administration by the introduction of a "Seven Point Agenda" on which wealth creation and poverty alleviation were the sixth key area for intervention. However, it did not significantly address the problem, and NBS statistics showed that by 2010, 60 percent of Nigerians were living in "absolute poverty".

The 2011 Goodluck Jonathan administration embraced the MDGs and produced a "Transformation Agenda" to address rising unemployment, inequality, poverty and other factors which had made it difficult for Nigeria to become a truly great country. Sadly, these poverty alleviation efforts did not yield the expected results, and Nigeria continued to be ranked among the poorest countries in the world in spite of its huge natural and human resources. Indeed, the World Bank's global poverty rating in 2014 placed Nigeria among the five poorest countries in the world, revealing that most Nigerians lived on less than one dollar per day. Releasing the report at the 2014 IMF/World Bank Spring Meetings in New York, World Bank President Jim Yong Kim emphasised that Nigeria had one of the largest concentrations of poor people in the world. In spite of the rebasing of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which confirmed its status as the largest economy in Africa, Kim stated that seven percent of the world's poor lived in Nigeria.

This shows that despite Nigeria's attempts to meet the MDGs, and the activities of the various poverty alleviation agencies established by successive administrations in the country, the scourge of poverty remains widespread.

Related to the high incidence of poverty is low human development. Nigeria's Human Development Index (HDI) score in 2012 was 0.471 (marginally up from 0.434 in 2005), placing the country firmly among those with low human development, as it placed 153rd out of 186 countries.

The inequality index also remained high. High inequality weakens the impact of growth on poverty reduction. Between 1985 and 2004, inequality in the country worsened, with its GINI index coefficient rising from 0.429 in 2004 to 0.45 in 2010, placing the country among those with the highest levels of inequality in the world. This manifests in highly unequal income distribution and differential access to basic infrastructure, education and training and job opportunities.

Nevertheless, "Nigeria 2015: Millennium Development Goals End-Point Report" published by the OSSAP-MDGs with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Department for International Development (DFID) in September 2015, asserted that the country made appreciable progress in attainment of the MDG1 target, "particularly in the fight against hunger, but generally missed meeting the targets of most indicators." According to the report:

"One major challenge to effective poverty reduction in Nigeria is the very limited reduction effect of

economic growth. Thus whereas the country recorded largely impressive growth rates in the 2000s decade and in more recent times, this was not entirely inclusive and neither did it reduce poverty or generate employment."

This report served as a guide for the Buhari administration when Nigeria exited the MDGs in 2015 and transitioned to the SDGs.

Buhari administration's poverty reduction strategy

Buhari appealed to industrialised countries to redeem their pledge of earmarking 0.7 percent of their GDP to development assistance, noting that United Kingdom was the only OECD country to have met the UN requirement, adding that "...with SDGs we have the opportunity to improve the lives of people, not just in the developing world, but in all nations."

Beyond this call for development assistance, the Buhari administration has been unwavering in its commitment to the smooth implementation of policies targeted at SDG1. It has embarked on initiatives that tackle poverty from a multi-sectorial perspective in order to create opportunities for good and decent jobs and secure livelihoods. This involves targeting those living in vulnerable situations, increasing access to basic resources and services, and supporting communities affected by conflict and climate-related disasters. The government is also encouraging inclusive and sustainable business practices and promoting better government policies as well as fair and accountable public institutions.

To fast-track his administration's poverty eradication initiative, on the 29th of May 2016, President Buhari launched a N500 billion Social Protection Programme to cater for a larger number of the poorest and most vulnerable Nigerians. The programme sought both to start the process of lifting many from poverty, and at the same time, to create the opportunity for people to fend for themselves.

Launching the programme, Buhari lamented that for too long Nigeria has been:

"...a society that neglects the poor and victimizes the weak, a society that promotes profit and growth over development and freedom. A society that fails to recognize that 'poverty is not just lack of money; it is not having the capability to realize one's full potential as a human being.'"

He said that under the Social Protection Programme, N500 billion was appropriated in the 2016 budget for social intervention programmes in five key areas. Of these, the job creation programme, which included the employment of 500,000 teachers and 100,000 artisans across the nation, would also ensure that 5.5 million children are provided with nutritious meals through a home-grown school feeding programme. This would both improve learning outcomes, and raise the rates of enrolment and completion. Through the N-Power programme, the government would pay stipends to unemployed graduates.

The Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) scheme would provide financial support for up to one million vulnerable beneficiaries and complement the Enterprise Promotion

Programme (EPP) - which was designed for 1.6 million people market traders, youths, artisans, small businesses and agricultural workers across the nation. Beneficiaries were to be given loans ranging from N10,000 to N100,000 with a repayment period of three to six months and administration cost of five percent. Essentially, the EPP is a loan scheme that will be handled by the Bank of Industry (BoI).



Princess Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire, Senior Special Assistant to the President on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Federal Government is also reviewing the globally acclaimed best practices, such as the Conditional Grants Scheme, to ensure there is right targeting and efficiency in resource allocation to the grassroots.

Through the Education Grant scheme, the government plans to encourage students studying science subjects, technology, engineering and maths, and lay a foundation for human capital development for the next generation.

The Vice President, Professor Yemi Osinbajo, said that the beauty of the scheme is that it is a combination of several well-thought out programmes which emphasise a direct connection with the extremely poor and the needy, as well as other categories of Nigeria's masses. He asserted that the plan of the Buhari presidency was comprehensive and had taken some of the factors that led to the failure of past poverty alleviation schemes into consideration:

"One of the major differences here is that the social intervention programme such as the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) would be a direct transfer of N5,000 monthly to the extremely poor among us. And this is a safety net that several advanced nations had put in place a long time in their history, and most often at times of economic challenges."

At the Civil Society Information Dissemination on Monitoring Federal Government Social Protection Programme (SPP) on SDGs held at Abuja in September 2016, the Special Adviser to the President on Social Investments, Maryam Uwais, said that despite the paucity of funding occasioned by the then prevailing economic crunch, government would ensure that vulnerable people benefit from the scheme:

"We are developing a comprehensive register of vulnerable people in the society so we want to engage the CSOs to ensure that the register is authentic and realisable. Nigerians are difficult. We were worried about our programme being politicised, so we want to make sure that our programmes reach every Nigerian irrespective of political affiliation, and irrespective of ethnicity or culture."

From the beginning of 2017, the Federal Government began to release money for the implementation of its



Mrs Maryam Uwais, Special Adviser to the President on Social Investments

social investment programmes. It has started funding the Home-grown School Feeding Programme in 17 states of the federation, namely Anambra, Akwa Ibom, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ebonyi, Enugu, Zamfara, Sokoto, Kaduna, Borno, Benue, Plateau, Taraba, Delta, Abia and Bauchi.

The N-Power Programme has also taken off, with the employment of 200,000 graduates across the country. In addition, the Conditional Cash Transfer is on course as payment has continued in the nine pilot states of Bauchi, Borno, Niger, Kogi, Cross River, Osun, Oyo, Ekiti, and Kwara States.

To sustain the momentum, the 2017 Budget estimates retain the allocation of N500 billion to the Special Intervention Programme. Out of this, N20 billion is earmarked for SDGs conditional grants and social safety nets, while N45 billion is set aside as the North East intervention fund.

The birth of the SDGs Private Sector Advisory Group

The Buhari administration takes the view that the social intervention programmes of government alone cannot adequately address the problem of extreme poverty in the country. It is against this background that it is involving the private sector in its poverty reduction drive. To this end, Vice President Osinbajo inaugurated the Sustainable Development Goals Private Sector Advisory Group (SDG-PSAG) on the 28th of February 2017, advising the elite to cater for the needs of poor and vulnerable people.

At the event, which took place at the Presidential Villa, Abuja, Osinbajo remarked that that government decided

to involve the private sector because Nigerians believe that it can assist in making a huge difference in their lives.

With so many people caught in the poverty trap, Osinbajo stressed the great need for the private sector elite to invest their money in doing something that would have a real impact, noting that nobody was going to measure the elite by how much money they have or what positions they hold, but their contribution towards lifting millions of Nigerians out of poverty:

"This is why I am excited about the public and the private sectors coming together to ensure that the Sustainable Development Goals are realised in our time and that indeed nobody is left behind."

The Vice President described the event as the beginning of partnership between the private and public sectors, and urged the elite to be in the vanguard of doing things that would reduce poverty and transform the country. He said the elite were the ones to whom the transformation of the society belonged to, adding that many societies that had truly transformed did so because their elite decided that it was worthwhile to do so.

The Senior Special Assistant to the President on SDGs, Princess Adejoke Orellope-Adefulire, said Nigeria was the first to inaugurate the Private Sector Action Group among the UN-member nations, and that by the event, the nation was standing on the threshold of history to forge a partnership between the private and public sector to build a consensus for the effective realisation of the SDGs.

Orellope-Adefulire said that the present administration is focused on stimulating action over the next 14 years in areas of critical importance, namely poverty and hunger eradication, preventable child death and all-inclusiveness in the Nigerian economy. She stressed that the administration was committed to the attainment of the SDGs, particularly poverty eradication as this would bring about some much-needed diversification of the Nigerian economy, thereby increasing wealth creation and revenue generation opportunities.

She said that one of the major challenges to implementing the SDGs was inadequate resource flow due to the global economic downturn. This had made it urgent to mobilise private sector funds to implement the SDGs and was what had informed the UN-SDGs Fund to establish the global partnership of the PSAG as a powerful platform for global business leaders to interact, leverage, and exchange cooperation for successful SDGs programmes.

On his part, Edward Kallon, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative said that his recent visits to some Northern states, namely Kaduna, Kano, Borno, Yobe and Adamawa, had greatly enriched his understanding and appreciation of the daily struggles and experiences of ordinary Nigerians, especially those in those in the camps established for Internally Displaced Persons (IDP):

"We are living in challenging, and yet interesting, times. The humanitarian crisis in the North-east, coupled with the current economic recession present challenges of unprecedented proportions. But while the challenges are enormous and unprecedented, there are also boundless opportunities. In local

communities in the North-east, I have witnessed firsthand, the great resilience of the people of this nation despite the social, economic and ecological vulnerabilities that confront them on a daily basis".

Kallon explained it had become imperative for the vibrant private sector in Nigeria to contribute resources to address the impact of the crisis and to reduce poverty. He urged the private sector to seize the opportunity to marshal all efforts, expertise and resources to bring about tangible and sustainable development in the North-east and other parts of the country.

The passage of the National Poverty Eradication Commission Bill

While the executive arm of government is fighting poverty through the social protection programme, on its part the legislative arm is charged with enacting a law that will strengthen the execution of the poverty eradication programmes in Nigeria.

In November 2016, a Bill for an Act to provide for the establishment of a National Poverty Eradication Commission (NAPEC) was passed by the Nigerian Senate. The bill seeks to tackle the high rate of poverty in the country.

Submitting a report on behalf of the Senate joint committee on National Planning and Economic Affairs, and Poverty Alleviation and Social Welfare, Senator Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso said:

"[This] is the first time in the history of the Nigerian federal legislature that an attempt is boldly being made in passing into law, a Bill that would put to test, the justifiability of economic and social provisions as contained in the Act."

The President of the Senate, Dr. Bukola Saraki, said that when established, the commission would serve as a statutory body to coordinate and monitor all poverty-related activities in Nigeria. It would also maintain an outreach with international donor organisations, and that each quarter, it would inform Nigerians amount of poverty reduction or increase as the case may be. Saraki referred to statistics which showed that the rate of poverty in the country was on the increase:

"The World Bank estimate for 2016 suggests that Nigeria's poverty headcount ratio, which is the percentage of the population living below the national poverty line, currently stands at 46 percent. Other developmental partners suggest that the rise in the cost of living around the world due to global fall in oil prices will further affect the poor and the middle class."

Saraki also referred to a recent NBS report which put Nigeria's unemployment rate at 9.9 percent.

"As we are all aware, the higher the rate of poverty and unemployment in the system, the more insecurity you will find in that system. Hence the Senate has taken on the challenge to establish the National Poverty Eradication Commission to serve as a data bank on all poverty related issues in the country."

He said that he was confident that the proposed Commission would go a long way in holistically confronting poverty which was affecting a lot of Nigerians.

Senator Ibrahim Gobir, who sponsored the bill, said that unlike the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and similar agencies already established by the Federal Government, the National Poverty Eradication Commission (NAPEC) would be backed with relevant laws to act as a government agency for catalysing resources at all times for the purposes of eradicating poverty and for mass participation in the economic development process.

Nigeria's recent poverty index

The integrated approach adopted by the Buhari administration in the implementation of SDG1 is expected to ensure that the goal is pursued in an inclusive and people-centred manner, with a focus on institutional and policy strengthening.

Yet more than a year and a half after Buhari joined other world leaders to adopt the SDGs with a resolve to attack poverty head on, a large proportion of Nigerians still live below poverty line and are exposed to various vulnerabilities. According to a poverty index report published by the NBS in October 2016, about 112 million Nigerians (representing 67.1 percent of the country's total population of 167million) live below the poverty line.

In the same vein, a recent United Nations report on Nigeria's Common Country Analysis (CCA), described the country as one of the poorest and most unequal in the world, with over 80 million or 64 percent of her population living below the poverty line. The report was made public in September 2016 during a consultative meeting on the formulation of the UN Development Assistance Framework IV (UNDAF IV) for the South-east geo-political zone in Awka, Anambra State. The report reads in part:

"Poverty and hunger have remained high in rural areas, remote communities and among female-headed households and these cut across the six geo-political zones, with prevalence ranging from approximately 46.9 percent in the South-west to 74.3 percent in North-west and North-east.

In Nigeria, 37 per cent of children under five years old were stunted, 18 percent wasted, 29 per cent underweight and overall, only 10 per cent of children aged 6-23 months are fed appropriately based on recommended infant and young children feeding practices. Youth unemployment which is 42 per cent in 2016 is very high, creating poverty, helplessness, despair and an easy target for crime and terrorism."

The report added that since Nigeria slipped into recession in the second quarter of 2016, the percentage of Nigerians that directly encounters poverty is becoming higher by the day.

As the effects of a slowing economy hit harder, Nigerians are confronted with the rising cost of living, declining productivity and fall in the value of their holdings of the naira, the local currency, following its crash on foreign exchange markets. Ahmed Adamu, a development expert who teaches economics at Umaru Musa Yar'Adua University in Katsina, said that going by the dollar income poverty threshold, more Nigerians are becoming poorer due to the depreciation of the naira: "So, we now have more poor people than before. The wealth of the rich people has also depreciated, as each unit of Naira has reduced in value."



Edward Kallon, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Nigeria

Adamu contended that for Nigeria to eradicate poverty in all its forms by 2030, the poverty threshold should be identified and reviewed regularly and promptly to accommodate inflation and exchange rate fluctuations. He advised the Buhari administration to establish a national action programme against poverty with active private sector participation, which would provide for funds to be collected from various sources and channelled towards eradicating rural and urban poverty in a transparent and accountable manner. He added that in order to effectively reduce poverty in Nigeria, the cost of governance must also be reduced so that resources can be transferred to the productive sectors by empowering young people to acquire modern and relevant skills of creativity and innovation.

Mike Obadan, a Professor of Economics at the University of Benin and former Director-General of the Nigerian Centre for Economic Management and Administration, Ibadan, said that what is clear from the upward trend in the incidence of poverty in Nigeria is that the economy still suffers a structural weakness as it continues to depend significantly on the production of commodities for export, with little value addition and few backward and forward linkages to other sectors of the economy:

"This structural weakness has prevented the country from translating growth to commensurate employment and faster social development. Yet, structural transformation is essential for the economy to accelerate and then sustain broad-based growth, to improve social conditions by creating jobs, lowering inequality and reducing poverty, and to reduce vulnerability to external shocks."

Factors constraining poverty reduction in Nigeria

Despite the plethora of poverty reduction programmes set up in the country fight poverty over several years, Nigeria is still ranked among the poorest countries in the world.

Some of the major problems constraining the successful implementation of poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria include poor policy formulation,

lack of coordination and sustainable strategy, lack of consultation with the poor, lack of political will, corruption, poor funding, and lack of basic infrastructure.

Poor policy formulation and lack of sustainable strategy

Poor policy formulation, lack of coordination and

Table 1: Poverty rate across 36 states in Nigeria

STATES	POVERTY RATE
Lagos	8.50%
Osun	10.90%
Anambra	11.20%
Ekiti	12.90%
Edo	19.20%
Imo	19.80%
Abia	21.00%
Rivers	21.10%
FCT (Abuja)	23.50%
Kwara	23.70%
Akwa Ibom	23.80%
Delta	25.10%
Ogun	26.10%
Kogi	26.40%
Ondo	27.90%
Enugu	28.80%
Bayelsa	29.00%
Oyo	29.40%
Cross River	33.10%
Plateau	51.60%
Nassarawa	52.40%
Ebonyi	56.00%
Kaduna	56.50%
Adamawa	59.00%
Benue	59.20%
Niger	61.20%
Borno	70.10%
Kano	76.40%
Gombe	76.90%
Taraba	77.70%
Katsina	82.20%
Sokoto	85.30%
Kebbi	86.00%
Bauchi	86.60%
Jigawa	88.40%
Yobe	90.20%
Zamfara	91.90%

Source: UN 2014

sustainable strategy speaks of an absence of the policy and institutional framework and delivery machinery that could guarantee coordination and effective monitoring. According to Dr. Damian Mbaegbu, an Associate Professor in Department of Business Administration and Management at Madonna University in Okija, one of the deficiencies in the poverty reduction strategies adopted by successive governments in Nigeria was that they did it through the doling out of money and the distribution of machinery and equipment to the poor.

"A good number of these poverty reduction policies over the years have failed to adopt strategy of developing local entrepreneurs through entrepreneurial skills and wealth creation processes which increases the purchasing power and demand for goods and services."

Another aspect of poor policy formation is weak monitoring and lack of impact assessment plans.

Other factors which have hindered poverty reduction in Nigeria include absence of collaboration and complementation among the three arms of government, Lack of consultation with the poor, lack of political will, corruption, poor funding and lack of basic infrastructure.

Indeed, it is believed that poverty persists in the country because governments have failed to provide basic infrastructure such as good roads, potable water and electricity which would enable the poor to be proactive about improving their own lives by their own efforts.

The way forward

The problem of poverty in Nigeria is complex, multidimensional and multifaceted. As such, it needs fresh reflection and rethinking of the strategies that have been formulated to tackle the problem in the past. That Nigeria is still ranked among the poorest nations in the world despite its huge resources and large population is indeed the paradox of poor people in a rich country: a case of "poverty in the midst of plenty."

As the Buhari administration comes forward with its own efforts to reduce poverty in Nigeria and meet the SDGs, experts believe that the way forward is to ensure that the poverty reduction strategies are properly structured to effectively target the poor who are supposed to be the actual beneficiaries. Kpelai Tersoo, a lecturer in the Department of Business Management at Benue State University in Makurdi, advised that the government's strategy for poverty reduction should be anchored on entrepreneurially driven policies that will economically empower the people, reduce poverty and propel economic growth.

He explained that the poor lack the capacity and power to transform their situations and therefore need empowerment after they have been trained and acquired skills to start micro enterprises.

Continuing, he said that sound curricula are required at all levels of the Nigerian educational system which emphasize entrepreneurial education and value orientation. He advised government to adopt a global approach to infrastructural development and to improve access to micro-credit facilities. In addition, government should inculcate an entrepreneurial spirit in Nigerian youths, especially students in tertiary institutions.



Professor Garba Umar Danbatta, Executive Vice Chairman, Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC)

Through this strategy fresh graduates are more likely to will create job opportunities for themselves instead of looking for jobs after graduation.

Anyakwee Nsirimovu, the Executive Director of the Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (IHRHL) said Nigeria needs strong institutions to fight poverty. He recommended the strengthening of anti-corruption agencies to treat cases of misappropriation of funds meant for poverty reduction programmes, urging that the fight against corruption be intensified because corruption is considered to be a debilitating factor in the fight against poverty.

He said that government should promote good governance, transparency and accountability in conjunction with the relevant agencies. Since President Buhari rode to power on the horse of integrity, holding aloft the banner of accountability and has been an anti-corruption crusader, Nsirimovu expressed hope that his administration would tackle corruption and poverty. According to him, if the current anti-corruption war is sustained and the efforts towards strengthening democracy are allowed to continue, there will be hope that poverty will be reduced.

For Professor Garba Umar Danbatta, Executive Vice Chairman of the Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC), the government should set institutional mechanisms which, flowing from different sectors, would address the SDG and achieve a reduction in poverty: "No single programme, institution or sector can guarantee the viability and efficiency of any poverty fighting mechanism."

He stressed the need for Nigeria to take advantage of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), new technologies and the revolution in big data to ensure that institutions work together by changing the way and speed of service delivery to ensure that the challenges of hunger and poverty are conquered. ■

4 QUALITY
EDUCATION

Quality Education Goal: The Problems and Prospects

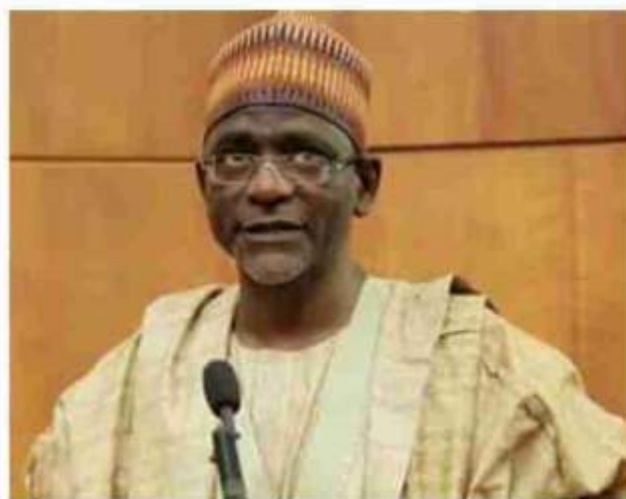
THERE is little doubt that the failure of countries like Nigeria to attain real appreciable progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was what led to the adoption of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGAS) in New York on September 25, 2015.

It is remarkable that Sustainable Goal four specifically encourages all UN-member countries, including Nigeria to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030.

Long before the adoption of the SDGs in 2015, Nigeria's educational system had variously been rated poor by many analysts. In a discussion with his students in the early 2000s, Abdulkadir Nauzo, a lecturer in the Department of English Language at the University of Abuja, argued that contrary to what many people think, the standard of education in Nigeria had not fallen as there is only one excellent standard. What had gone bad were things that ought to sustain that standard. One of these is facilities, many of which, as at the early 2000s, were moribund in many tertiary institutions, secondary and primary schools across the country. It was so bad that the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) embarked on a six-month strike to protest, among other matters of concern, the poor state of education in Nigeria's universities. Clearly, little was achieved by the strike, as 12 years later, ASUU again called its members out on strike to protest what it called "the abysmal state of Nigerian universities." In embarking on the fresh strike, ASUU said that the Federal Government had failed to honour the agreement on improving the university system that it had reached with the union in 2009. The strike also lasted six months and in order to resolve it, the Goodluck Jonathan administration agreed to release the sum of N200 billion per annum to be disbursed to Nigerian Universities over a five-year period. But issues surrounding the 2009 agreement remain unresolved, and ASUU has again threatened to go on strike. Nor is ASUU the only body to do so, as associations of Polytechnic and College of Education lecturers had also embarked on strike action over the government's failed promises or breaches of contract.

In late January this year, Dr Chika Ogonwa, National Coordinator of the Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) in the South-south and South-east geo-political zones, ascribed the 'warning strike' that ASUP had embarked upon on the insensitivity of the government. He said that the strike was meant to draw attention to the terrible state of the sector and save it:

"... from total collapse [caused by] poor funding, discriminatory practices, decayed infrastructure, weak and obsolete legal and regulatory regimes, wanton and wilful breach of agreements as well as serial and sustained cases of impunity in the sector."



Mallam Adamu Adamu, Minister of Education

A month before that, College of Education lecturers in the country had also downed tools to protest the non-payment of their salaries for eight months.

On most occasions when tertiary education lecturers embark on strike action, part of government's strategy has been to initiate conciliatory moves while pledging to better fund the sector or address the challenges at some later date.

Perhaps in an attempt to be proactive and avoid another strike by university lecturers, on the 13th of February 2017, the Minister of Education, Mallam Adamu Adamu, inaugurated "a 14-man team to re-negotiate the 2009 Agreement reached between the Federal Government and University-based Staff Unions." The Minister said that:

"[The] inauguration marks the beginning of a drive for re-negotiation across the three segments of the tertiary education sub-sector; Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics, starting with those of Universities."

At the ceremony, while thanking the Federal Government for revisiting the issue, ASUU President Professor Biodun Ogunyemi expressed the hope that the exercise would not be aborted midstream like others before it. That was a reminder of the inconsistency that has plagued Nigeria's education system as regards government policies and implementation over the years.

A few months before that, the Vanguard newspaper report headlined: "Buhari's 2017 education budget: We are still in shock - ASUU" contained the news that President Buhari had:

"... released the 2017 budget of N7.298 trillion with the Ministry of Education expected to gulp N398.01billion in recurrent expenditure...under capital expenditure, it was stated in the budget that the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) will get N92 billion and Education N50 billion. On the whole, a total of N540.01billion will be expended on education sector in 2017. Basically, the Federal Ministry of Education is expected to adequately cater for the 36 federal universities, 25 federal polytechnics, 22 federal colleges of education and 104 federal unity schools. In 2016, the education sector which got N369.6billion from a total national budget of N6.07trillion was described as still the lowest since 2012. Thus, from N306.3billion in 2011, it moved to N400.15billion in 2012, to N426.53billion in 2013, to N493billion in 2014, to N492billion in 2015, to N369billion in 2016."

With statistics like this, Nigeria is far from achieving the UN's 26per cent budget recommendation for education.

Rescue agencies

The 2009 Federal Government-ASUU agreement and expected funding therefrom was for universities alone, but at the tertiary level there are also polytechnics and colleges of education. The funding for all three sets of institutions is done through the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund). According to A.B. Baffa, Executive Secretary of TETFund, quoted in an official report released by the agency, TETFund had N213,418,124,493.75 for its 2016 budget. This sum was to be shared among the different institutions, with each of the 40 Federal universities and 34 State universities receiving N1,009,410,000.00. Each of the 54 public polytechnics would get N691,632,000.00, while each of the 55 public colleges of education would receive N679,057,000.00. Baffa described the 2016 budget as the "the biggest ever annual direct disbursement (normal intervention) given to any beneficiary institution since the establishment of the Fund."

TETFund's 2016 budget was disbursed under the following terms:

1. Annual direct disbursements: N149,392,687,145.63.
2. High Impact Phase VI: N30,000,000,000.00.
3. Zonal interventions: N12,000,000,000.00.
4. Stabilization Fund: N10,670,906,224.69.
5. Designated projects: N5,400,000,000.00.
6. National Research Fund: N1,000,000,000.00

Generally, the funds were meant to:

"... accelerate the training and support for scholars in Nigeria's tertiary education institutions to pursue and acquire doctorate degrees; accelerate the process of bridging the teaching and learning infrastructure gap in all beneficiary institutions; and continue to support cutting edge research and innovation."

The role of UBE

The Nigerian government acknowledges that the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme will be key to its achieving its development goals. Established in 1999, UBE's primary objective is "to eradicate illiteracy,

ignorance and poverty as well as stimulate and accelerate national development, political consciousness and national integration." For such a critical agency, it is surprising that even by its own admittance, since it was set up, its progress was "hampered by lack of an enabling law to execute certain aspects of the programme." This issue was addressed on the 26th of May 2004, when President Obasanjo signed the Universal Basic Education Act into law. Its provisions were described as follows:

"The UBE Act 2004 makes provision for basic education comprising of ECCE, Primary and Junior Secondary Education. The financing of basic education is the responsibility of States and Local Governments. However, the Federal Government has decided to intervene in the provision of basic education with 2 per cent of its Consolidated Revenue Fund. For states to fully benefit from this Fund, criteria were established with which states are to comply. The Act also provides for the establishment of the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) to co-ordinate the implementation of the programme at the states and local government through the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) of each state and the Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs)."

Long before the adoption of the SDGs in 2015, Nigeria's educational system had variously been rated poor by many analysts

On the 4th and 7th of October 2016, the management of the UBEC held a meeting with the Executive Chairmen of State and FCT Universal Basic Education Boards at Crest Hotel in Jos. In the communiqué issued at the end of the meeting, which had as its theme: "Strategic Planning: An Essential Tool For Effective Implementation of Basic Education in Nigeria", the organisers stated that it had been convened to "review the operational modalities in the delivery of basic education in Nigeria with a view to making necessary adjustments for optimal performance."

Part of the grim statistics from the UBEC meeting was the disclosure that "the 2015 Global Monitoring Report (GMR) by UNICEF revealed that Nigeria had the highest number of out-of-school children in the world which was estimated to be around 10.5 million," something the members considered "a worrisome trend and remains a major challenge in the delivery of basic education in the country."

A high percentage of these out-of-school children are in northern part of Nigeria, and in this regard, a 2005 UNICEF report states that:

"Over the last decade, Nigeria's exponential growth in population has put immense pressure on the country's resources and on already overstretched public services and infrastructure. With children under 15 years of age accounting for about 45 percent of the country's population, the burden on education and other sectors has become overwhelming. Forty percent of Nigerian children aged 6-11 do not attend any primary school with the Northern region

recording the lowest school attendance rate in the country, particularly for girls."

By 2015, the situation had not changed, as another UNICEF report revealed that "10.5 million children are out of school," in Nigeria, with "more than 60 percent of them girls."



Prof. Anthony Anwukah, Minister of State for Education

Betty Abah, Executive Director, Centre for Children's Health, Education, Orientation and Protection (CEE-HOPE) blames the high out of school children on cultural and religious practices in the northern part of the country. "The rate of OOS (out-of-school) children is high in the North due to culture, a negligent elite, failure on the part of government to enforce education policies and mass poverty."

Reversing the trend

Abah feels that the government has a role to play in reducing the high number of out-of school children in Nigeria. Part of the way to achieve this, she says, is to provide incentives:

"There is lack of incentives for these children. First, government has to offer them irresistible incentives such as very delicious school meals. I know people who have been 'lured' into schooling because of the prospects of meals by missionaries, and along the way, their lives are improved."

At the time of writing, the Muhammadu Buhari administration has commenced implementation of one of its election campaign promises, namely to provide a free meal every day to Nigerian school children. Prince Chibueze-Agbo Ndubuisi, former Ebonyi State Commissioner for education says it is a good policy that should be sustained. "The feeding programme as has been introduced by the federal government should be sustained. A hungry child cannot concentrate in school."

SUBEB's action plan

To improve access to education at the Primary level in Nigeria, SUBEB has a vital role to play. SUBEB is the acronym for the State Universal Basic Education Board. According to the Osun State chapter of SUBEB, the programme is to:

"Ensure unfettered access to nine years of formal basic education; the provision of free, Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school going age; reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system, through improved relevance, quality and efficiency; ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning."

The communiqué from the meeting between UBEC and the Executive Chairmen of State and FCT Universal Basic Education Boards in Jos states that "SUBEB's Action Plans should be aligned to their respective Education Sector Plans especially in addressing UBE prioritized needs and the Ministerial Strategic Plan." But, it notes, the government "cannot realise its mandate in basic education sub-sector when billions of naira meant for improving the quality of basic education, remain unaccessed in the Central Bank."

Poor funding of the education sector

Despite the publication of the amounts spent funding schools at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, some think that the impact on the education sector in Nigeria is minimal and therefore inadequate. Professor Aloysius-Michaels Okolie of the Department of Political Science at the University of Nigeria in Nsukka says that a lot still needs to be done as the standard of infrastructure in Nigerian institutions remain very poor:

"Presently over 40 per cent of the academic staff do not have functional offices. Most of the offices are poorly equipped and not particularly suitable for productive scholarship. Besides, 70 per cent of professorial offices do not have convenient and critical equipment for research. Worse still, the energy situation has now compelled the staff to resort to self help by funding the project of furnishing their respective offices."

Okolie noted that the abysmal situation is not restricted to just infrastructure because the quality of personnel is also depreciating with passage of time.

He added that the management of the funds in some institutions is shrouded in secrecy and deployed mostly to settle loyal but unproductive elements who have no professional calling to teach. That is not the only challenge, as he is also of the view that over 60 per cent of academic staff recruited to teach appears ill prepared for the task of scholarship:

"Qualification for appointment of academic staff in some tertiary institution is now based on 'who you know' and 'who you are prepared to serve' and not on service delivery...the implications are better imagined."

To Professor Okolie, the damage caused by poor funding of the education sector is multifarious:

"Poor funding and mismanagement of funds in Nigerian universities have infused frustration, indolence and lack of critical thinking. Poor funding and poor remunerations have combined to reduce viable manpower to a level of zeroing down to thinking within the ambit of 'stomach infrastructure.' Valuable time is now wasted on micro-survivalist research

endeavours that veer attention away from demands of positive scholarship. Over time the very good eggheads get frustrated and search for greener pastures. Brain drain derails sustained research and truncates consistent scholarship that produces critical inventions."

Dwelling on the same issue of poor funding is Shantaram Hegdekatte, an Indian educationist who was the chief executive officer of Educomp Nigeria, a company engaged by the former governor of Rivers State, Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi, to oversee one of its public schools. Speaking generally about public schools in Nigeria, Hegdekatte stated: "If money has been spent, [there is] very little to show for it on ground." He described Government schools in Nigeria as "beyond repair."

The poor state of schools aside, Raphael James, the Director General of the Centre for Research, Information Management and Media Development (CRIMMD) says they are not even sufficient to cater to the growing population. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, as at 2013 Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, had a population of 173.6 million. While there is an increase in the number of students being enrolled, James said that the number of institutions available did not grow proportionally to meet the needs of the children concerned:

"For example, while enrolment in secondary schools increased from 297,605 in 1987 to 347,276 in 1990, the number of schools established increased from 334 to 342 within the same period. Nigeria has about 60,913 secondary schools; 92 universities, 27 federal, 30 states, 35 private and 19 other award institutions."

Ephraim Kuji, a secondary school teacher in Abuja, also thinks there is a shortage of infrastructure and wants the shortfall corrected in view of the "constantly growing number of the poor seeking access to education."

One of the assignments that Educomp handled on behalf of the Rivers State government was recruiting teachers for secondary schools and conducting examination for students. These assignments gave Hegdekatte an opportunity to see things from a close perspective. His verdict:

"The so-called government teachers are mostly not qualified and have been recruited by corrupt practices. And their salaries are not paid for months! As a result they hardly attend the schools! This is the bitter reality!"

As for the students, the Indian administrator said:

"When we conducted an entrance examination, results revealed a lot about the status of education. IQ and aptitude scores of Nigerian students were on par with the global averages if not higher. Language skills were also acceptable. But scores in mathematics and science were abysmally low, showing that kids are intelligent but education system failed them. This handicap could be seen across primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of education."

Poor performance in external exams

The results of the National Examinations Council (NECO) released by the National Bureau of Statistics between 2011 and 2015 give an idea of the performance of Nigerian students in mathematics and science subjects.

MATHEMATICS

Of the 1,190,365 registered candidates in Mathematics for 2011, 3,355 scored A1 while 89,023 got F9 (the rest hovered among the grades between). In 2012, 88,544 candidates out of the 1,088,530 who sat for the exam recorded F9, while not a single candidate scored A1. In 2013, of the 1,020,260 who sat for mathematics, 63,796 scored F9 while no one made A1. For 2014, 960,600 sat and while 45,365 scored F9, forty nine candidates got A1. In 2015, of the 961,258 who sat, 21,810 scored F9 while 4,616 secured A1.

BIOLOGY

1,182,161/1,112,947 sat for Biology in 2011. Of these, 70,059 scored F9 while 1,170 attained A1. In 2012, the result sheet showed that while 1,088,530 sat, 77,050 scored F9 and no one got A1. In 2013, 1,017,350 wrote the exam, and while 56,241 got F9, not a single candidate secured A1. The situation was not different in 2014 as there was no A1 candidate. Rather, of the 783,975 who sat for the exam, 51,519 scored F9. There was an improvement in 2015 as 21 candidates scored A1 out of the 719,995 who sat while 31,885 failed (F9).

Poor funding and mismanagement of funds in Nigerian universities have infused frustration, indolence and lack of critical thinking

CHEMISTRY

446,456/427,765 registered for Chemistry in 2011 out of whom 874 scored A1 while 26,702 scored F9. It was worse in 2012 as no student scored A1 while 19,449 failed the subject. There was no improvement in 2013 as again the A1 chart read 0 while 21,831 failed with F9. 2014 was also woeful as not a single candidate from the 783,975 who sat the exam scored A1, while the failure rate was 15,006. 2015 saw some improvement as 577 persons scored A1 even though 9,907 earned F9.

PHYSICS

Of the 446,009/426,388 candidates who sat for Physics in 2011, 1,040 got A1 while 20,233 scored F9. The performance dropped in 2012 as no student got A1 while 19,449 scored F9. In 2013, only four students got A1 out of the 417,501 who sat the exam, while 13,607 failed. The performance dropped in 2014 as there was no A1 candidate while out of the 418,440 who sat the exam 15,006 scored F9. 2015 was a little better as 258 students scored A1 while 6,968 from the overall 432,509 who sat for the test failed it.

Policy reversals

Performances like this tend to justify the opinion of Hegdekatte and others that the quality of education in Nigeria is poor, and that in part, this is caused by the poor state of facilities and the poor quality of teachers in many public and even private schools. Poor facilities are the result of poor funding but that is not the only impediment to progress in Nigeria; Government inconsistency is another. Governments in Nigeria appear to think that



Prof. Biodun Ogunyemi, President, Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU)

jettisoning or failing to improve on the policies or ideas they inherited is a way of proving their independence, or of rubbishing the achievements of their predecessors. When they are not outrightly criticizing or lampooning their colleagues, they initiate new policies to override existing ones. While this may seem to have become rampant in recent times, it is far from being a recent phenomenon as James recollects that since January 15, 1966 when the first military coup in Nigeria took place, there has been frequent changes in educational policies from one administration to the other.

This is a view shared by Prince Chibueze-Agbo Ndubuisi, former Ebonyi State Commissioner for Education as he pointed out that "Every administration wants to change the system without proper and critical study of what is on ground."

The poor state of public schools is believed to have benefited the private schools as many parents prefer to enrol their children in them. Kuji, who teaches at a private secondary school in Abuja says private schools are neater than public schools, and that they also boast better facilities.

Better facilities probably explain why many private schools are more expensive than public schools but are not necessarily better in terms of quality. Comparing the situation in his country - India - to Nigeria, Hegdekatte claimed that:

"Education in Nigeria has become only for super rich! Entire generation of Nigerians is growing up without the basic education. This is a demographic disaster waiting to happen."

Is the SDGs Quality Education goal attainable?

Goal setting, catchphrases and slogans are not new in Nigeria. While the SDGs were not created by Nigeria, the fact that it has signed up to them makes them binding. But doubts persist as to whether the country can attain the SDG Quality Education goal. James noted that it is not the first time the country would be part of ambitious goals, and that antecedents of the present commitments are well known. He recalled that "in the 80's and 90's we heard of 'Education for All in Year 2000.' But by 2000, the problem remained

unsolved. He says it is doubtful whether attaining SDG Quality Education goal will become a reality in Nigeria.

Professor Okolie was no less pessimistic about Nigeria achieving the SDG Quality Education goal by 2030:

"This remains a tall and unrealistic dream. The way we are going, even in 2050, Nigeria will remain a harbinger for incubating illiterates and half-baked manpower. The idea of unifying the curriculum of institutions of higher learning smacks of a polity with deceptive semblance of common problems with a one-dose curative pill."

Chizo Asomugha, President of the Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics believes that in Nigeria, governments at various levels are not well enough acquainted with the global urgency and exigency for meeting SDG4:

"There does not appear to be any concerted focus on the part of governments to take the SDGs seriously. As at yet, the efforts made in that direction are so feeble they can only pass for lip service."

National Coordinator of the Education Rights Campaign, Mr Hassan Soweto, is also not hopeful about Nigeria's chances in this regard considering the current trend of its "pro-capitalist education policies and the lacklustre attitude to funding":

"I do not think it is feasible for Nigeria to achieve the SDG goal 4. Every bit of Nigeria's education policies contravenes the spirit and aims of the SDG goals. Our education policies promote exclusion instead of inclusion. The economic system of Nigeria is still capitalism which means social services, including education, are seen not as government responsibility but as business, and students are seen as customers."

However, Soweto noted that if the Buhari administration is serious about achieving the target, the first step is to declare free education at all levels and devote public resources to providing the required facilities needed to ensure that education is not only free but also qualitative.

Government's action plan

In its bid to revitalize the education sector in the implementation of its change agenda; the Federal Government convened a 3-Day Task Team Implementation Status meeting in Abuja in December 2016 through the Ministry of Education. Its purpose was to review, evaluate and examine the level of progress so far made in the execution of the 2016 Sustainable Development Goals' (SDGs) projects and programmes across the country. The meeting was also geared towards identifying gaps, challenges and making hard-nosed recommendations to reposition the education sector as a major driver of growth and development in the country. The Senior Special Assistant (SSA) to the President on SDGs and former Lagos State Deputy Governor, Princess Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire, made it clear that the Muhammadu Buhari administration would go the whole hog in the realization of SDG-4, to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education, and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all:

"The SDG-4 is transformative and universal, attends to the unfinished business of the Education For All (EFA) goals and the education related MDGs 2 and 3, while also addressing global and national education challenges."

Aware of the importance of a functioning system in the pursuit of lofty goals of this nature, the Presidential aide told the impressive audience that the 2030 target date for the realization of the global SDGs would be a mere dream if the education sector in Nigeria is not fixed to meet the challenges of the times: "For Nigeria to attain SDGs by 2030, there must be a functional education system that is accessible by all and responsive to the requirements of the 21st century skills." She added that SDG-4 and its objectives must be captured in the national education policy and planning.

Orelope-Adefulire highlighted some preconditions which must be met if Nigeria is to walk the same path as the rest of the world in the pursuit of this goal, and the country and her teeming citizens are to heave a sigh of relief on or before 2030. According to the SDGs boss, gone are the days when government shoulders the responsibility of "doing it alone." She stressed that all hands must be on deck to push through the total overhauling of the education sector, especially in the area of funding and teachers' training.

Apparently to ensure that Nigeria does not lag behind as she did with the MDGs, Orelope-Adefulire said that a good number of Nigerian youths would benefit from the partnership of the SDGs office with some international organizations in the sphere of training: "The present administration through my office in collaboration with Google/MindtheGap Foundation has proposed the digital training of 100,000 youths in Nigeria towards sustainable development."

Given the stark reality staring the nation on its face, through the instrumentality of Management By Objective (MBO), the Education Ministry is working round the clock for optimal use of resources with the emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness. For the first time in many years, the ministry has swiftly moved to block leakages in its funding channels and to ensure adequate value for money in projects implementation and execution. In his keynote address the Minister of State for Education, Professor Anthony Anwukah, described the meeting as historic, saying that the review of the implementation of the projects would keep the ministry abreast of the pressing issues that need to be tackled squarely. While calling on beneficiaries to be transparent in their conduct, Professor Anwukah noted the importance the Buhari administration accords the education sector: "The present administration holds education as one of its flagship sectors in its effort at improving school effectiveness, learning outcomes as well as lifelong education."

Way out of the rot: Partnership financing

Attaining progress on education and meeting the SDG goals will go beyond planning without effective implementation. As the experts have said, amongst other things, it will also require improved funding of the sector, the political will to curb corruption and mediocrity, and partnership with the private sector. While the Federal Government has collaborated with the private sector, including foreign agencies, on education matters in the past two years, it needs to deepen such engagement. One of such partnerships was visible at Nigeria's Annual Education Conference 2016 which took place in Abuja on November 2016. Vice President Yemi Osinbajo delivered the keynote address at the event, with the theme,

Learning Opportunities for All: The Critical Role of Teachers. The conference was sponsored by the UK's DFID Education projects (Education Data Research and Evaluation in Nigeria, Education Sector Support Programme In Nigeria, Girls Education Programme, Developing Effective Private Education in Nigeria and Teachers Development Programme), the British Council, UNICEF, State Education Partnership Investment Programme, Nigeria Partnership for Education Project, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Universal Basic Education Commission. The 2016 conference was a follow up to that of 2015 which had also been organised by the Federal Ministry of Education in partnership with some education development stakeholders such as Education Data, Research and Evaluation in Nigeria (EDOREN), the British Council, the Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN), the Teacher Development Programme (TDP), UNICEF, the UK DFID and the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC). Professor Anwuka, the Minister of State for Education, declared open the 2016 event that "interrogated the importance of evidence (knowledge, research, data) in strengthening policy making and good practice in Nigeria's basic education systems." In particular, it examined evidence and policy in four key areas: Better Primary School Teachers, Improved Learning Outcomes, Safe Schools and Better Use of Data."

Poor facilities are the result of poor funding but that is not the only impediment to progress in Nigeria; Government inconsistency is another

Beyond such collaboration, direct private sector involvement could go a long way towards improving not only the quality of education but also providing less privileged children with the opportunity to go to school. In February 2017, a foundation established by Nollywood actress, Tonto Dike, pledged to renovate some schools in Warri and provide items such as books, whiteboard and school uniforms.

Ndubuisi, now a school proprietor, wants the government to exert political will as he sees that as the way to stamp out corruption and other ills plaguing the system such as the recruitment of unqualified teachers based on ethnicity, favouritism, cronyism and extortion.

On policy implementation or lack of it, Ndubuisi says Nigeria has a very serious problem in implementation, especially with regards to education programmes and projects.

Eric Okoro, a lecturer in the department of social sciences at the Federal Polytechnic, Nekede in Imo State wants the authorities to refocus the curriculum in favour of skills-based courses by introducing into the curriculum certain skill requiring jobs considered (odd) for graduates as special areas of study and specialization. These include plumbing, vulcanizing, refuse technology and control, carpentry which will include building and

roofing, hairdressing and weaving. And just as the National Universities Commission (NUC) was established to oversee universities, Okoro wants a National Polytechnics Commission to be set up as an apex body that will regulate and improve that arm of tertiary education.

Halting strikes

An ugly feature of the Nigerian education system is the frequent strikes embarked on by lecturers to protest the state of the sector. While some are unhappy about this and consider that some of ASUU's claims are selfish, Professor Okolie does not share that view as he believes that ASUU's actions are driven by love of country:

"I must have to state that the present gains recorded in our institutions are largely orchestrated by ASUU. ASUU remains the only 'man' standing in reviving, sustaining and stimulating the flame of decency, good conscience and transparency in the management of the Universities. ASUU as a Union is responsible and resort to strike/industrial action as only the last resort. We have come to realise, though painfully, that the only language understood by the political leaders in dealing with academic matters is strike. ASUU detests strike and has, over the years, made conscious efforts - including

reasonable consultations and lobbying - to avert strikes but surprisingly, those at the helm of affairs insist on dragging ASUU into avoidable industrial actions. Perhaps they gain more in this regrettable scenario. Remove ASUU in Nigerian Institutions, and the result will be total decimation of academic values and total infrastructural decay."

To put an end to strikes and ensure uninterrupted academic sessions, Okoro proposes that the government should - as a matter of urgency - establish a statutory body that must meet every three months to dialogue and negotiate with stakeholders on issues affecting the education sector.

One of UNESCO's seven target goals as revealed in its Education Strategy 2014-2021 is that:

"... by 2030, all countries allocate at least 4-6 per cent of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or at least 15-20 per cent of their public expenditure to education, prioritizing groups most in need, and strengthen financial co-operation for education, prioritizing countries most in need."

Despite the pessimism expressed by many Nigerians, the country would do well to be part of the successful group. ■

5 GENDER EQUALITY



An Appraisal of Nigeria's SDG Gender Equality Project

GENDER equality and women's economic empowerment are at the centre of the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Although gender equality has been included amongst the top targets that countries must meet in order to reach the ultimate SDG, the issue has been on the front burner of international development agendas for decades.

The SDG document noted that increasing women's participation in the labour force and improving their income-earning opportunities as well as eliminating other forms of gender barriers would engender speedy economic growth and poverty reduction across the globe.

A recent World Bank Group report says that "income, employment, and assets empower women - and that benefits society as a whole". Thus the ambitious scope of the Sustainable Development Goals represents a new window of opportunity to tackle structural constraints that have held women back, forcing them to lag behind men in most measures of economic opportunities and preventing them from making a meaningful contribution to socio-economic and political development around the world.



Senator Aisha Alhassan, Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development

As is to be expected, Nigeria remains a focus of global policy leaders and stakeholders in the SDGs' Gender Equality project. Being one of the many countries where tradition, custom, sexual stereotyping of social roles and cultural prejudice militate against the enjoyment of rights and full participation of women on an equal basis with men in national development, Nigeria features amongst the list of nations whose fortunes are likely to change for the better with gender equality.

As a member of the United Nations, Nigeria has signed and ratified various relevant international instruments, treaties and conventions that require member nations to establish mechanisms to eliminate gender discrimination and to ensure equality and human dignity to all men and women. The world's most populous black nation subscribed to and pledged to actualize the Gender Equality Sustainable Development Goal No. 5.

Yet the question remains: What efforts have the Nigerian government and other stakeholders made so far to meet the Gender Equality goals of the sustainable development project? Is the government of Nigeria truly committed to addressing the gender imbalance in society in line with SDG5? A look at its gender policy and efforts so far will help evaluate progress so far.

Nigeria's Gender Policy

In line with various international commitments, as far back as 2006, the Nigerian government had developed a National Gender Policy that focuses on gender mainstreaming, women empowerment and eliminating discriminatory practices that are harmful to women. The National Gender Policy, which replaced the National Policy on Women (NPW) was designed to equip stakeholders with strategic skills for engineering the levels of social change required for the empowerment of all citizens to participate actively in the country's socio-economic and political development. It was one of the cardinal objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which preceded the SDGs. MDG3, to which Nigeria subscribed, was geared towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

Under Nigeria's Gender Policy document, the Federal Government is committed to building a nation devoid of gender discrimination, guaranteeing equal access to political, social and economic wealth creation opportunities for women and men; and developing a culture that places a premium on the protection of all, including children.

To achieve this ambitious goal, the Federal Government pledged to take drastic policy measures that would promote the full participation of women in both the public and private sectors as agents of development. The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development was designated as the vehicle for engineering the speedy and healthy involvement of Nigerian women in the mainstream of the national development processes.

The government also proposed to develop a National Gender Strategic Framework (NGSF) which would outline explicit implementation, monitoring and evaluation guidelines for achieving measurable targets and enhancing accountability to gender equality and women's empowerment.

The then Minister for Women's Affairs and Social Development, Mrs Inna Maryam Ciroma, said that the Ministry intended to use global standards as instruments to formulate and assess progress and achievements on the country's gender efforts.

The Core strategies for achieving the objectives of the National Gender Policy include:

- Policy, partnership and programme reforms through mainstreaming of gender concerns at all levels;
- Gender education and capacity building to enhance necessary technical expertise and positive gender culture;
- Legislative reforms to guarantee gender justice and respect for human rights; and
- Economic reforms for enhanced productivity and sustainable development, especially that which addresses the needs of women and children, and other vulnerable groups.

Nigeria features amongst the list of nations whose fortunes are likely to change for the better with gender equality

Ten years after

Ten years down the line, how has Nigeria's gender policy fared? To what extent has the government demonstrated its commitment towards balancing the gender equation in Nigeria? Has Nigeria made giant strides or retrogressed in its gender equality programme?

Sadly, despite spirited efforts of the Olusegun Obasanjo administration and its successors to address the problems of Nigeria's huge gender imbalance, significant gender gaps in education, economic empowerment and political participation remain. As many anticipated, the major challenge faced by the country's gender policy objectives remain moving from the policy prescriptions to the actualisation of the policy goals and targets.

While progress towards parity in primary school education has been recorded over the last decade, there remains a significant wage and labour force participation gender gap. Discriminatory laws and practices, violence against women and gender stereotypes continue to stall progress towards gender equality in the country. Nigeria still records a particularly high maternal mortality rate each year, while access to quality health care for women is limited, especially in rural areas.

In his handover note to President Muhammadu Buhari on the 29th of May, 2015, the then outgoing President Goodluck Jonathan stated that his administration made giant strides in its gender mainstreaming efforts:

"We have promoted gender-mainstreaming with commensurate priority and opportunities for our womenfolk, beginning with ensuring that not less than

30 percent of key federal appointments go to women. Other initiatives that we have taken include: the National Gender Policy, Establishment of Gender Units in Federal MDAs, Women Empowerment Training Programmes, Micro-Credit for Women, Social Safety Net Programmes and the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Scheme."



Aisha Buhari, wife of Nigerian President

But beyond what some critics dismissed as "cosmetic gender political pandering", for the most part the Jonathan government failed to tackle deep-rooted gender issues that have marginalised women's socio-economic and political emancipation for decades. Nonetheless, the Jonathan administration appears to have achieved more success in its gender mainstreaming efforts than its successor.

While many would criticize the Yar'Adua/Jonathan administrations for failing to take concrete steps to address structural issues that undermine gender equality in Nigeria, none would doubt the prominent role women played in the political arena of the time. Things have changed for the worse since then.

The 2015 general election witnessed a significant reduction in the number of women holding political office or appointed to key government posts in the country. Many gender activists were disappointed that in the 2015 National Assembly election only eight women (7.3 percent) were elected to the 109-member Senate, while 14 (4 percent) managed to secure seats in the 360-member House of Representatives. In all, the proportion of women elected to the National Assembly fell to 5.6 percent in 2016 from above 7 percent in the previous session. The governorship elections produced only four women - as deputy governors - in the 2015 election. To make matters worse, when President Muhammadu Buhari swore in 36 ministers on November 11, 2015, only five women made it into his cabinet. Besides the noticeable absence of women in the new political dispensation, the Buhari administration has remained largely indifferent to issues relating to gender equality and women empowerment.

Major gender equality impediments

Despite its pledges and policy commitment towards addressing gender imbalance in the society, there are no noticeable changes in the gender equation in Nigeria thus far. Investigations show that the country is still bedevilled by socio-economic, political and cultural barriers that impede gender balance. There is no evidence that entrenched societal norms, rules and values that stack the odds against women and in favour of men have even been much reduced, let alone eliminated.

Patriarchy system

In general, Nigeria remains a patriarchal society where men dominate all spheres of national affairs as well as women's lives. As in other male-dominated societies, the social relations and activities of Nigerian women and men are governed by a patriarchal system of socialization and by cultural practices which favour the interests of men above those of women.

Despite a great number of women who have distinguished themselves in their various professional and business careers during the last decade, a high percentage of women's employment is still restricted to low income activities, concentrated within the lower levels of the unregulated and informal sector. By comparison, men employed in the informal sector are located in the upper levels and are predominantly engaged in higher income activities.

In other words, Nigerian women still find themselves playing second fiddle, with a subordinate role at all levels, despite the government's repeated pledges to take steps to breaking down gender walls. Even the solemn commitment by Federal Government to take critical steps for mainstreaming gender into governance in order to liberate Nigeria's human capital resource for active participation in national development - especially with respect to politics and public life - appears to have suffered a major setback under the Buhari administration.

Constitutional rights

Despite a general commitment to the principle of non-discrimination enshrined in Chapter 2 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, governments at all levels have largely been unable or unwilling to fulfil the responsibility of giving male and female citizens equal opportunities in all aspects of national life.

Several negative aspects of gender relations, such as gender-based division of labour, disparities between male and female access to power and resources, and gender biases in rights and entitlements, remain pervasive in Nigeria.

For instance, while Section 43 of the 1999 Constitution permits both male and female Nigerians to own and acquire movable and immovable property, a large number of women in Nigeria are barred from owning land by customary laws of inheritance. At present, there is little indication of any genuine political will of efforts to address the constitutional quagmire affecting gender issues.

Gender roles

Gender-based norms which ascribe to women the responsibility of carrying out tasks related to household

management or chores such as cooking, cleaning, caring for children and the elderly, which do not diminish when women engage in paid employment, has remained unchanged in Nigeria. No new law or policy has been designed by government to address this dual burden which prevents women from pursuing their careers and reach management and decision making positions at the same pace and rate as their male colleagues.

Legal and Human Rights

As in most nations, Nigeria possesses a body of laws which regulate and govern various aspects of both public and private life. For instance, marriage is regulated by and can be contracted under statute, customary law and Islamic (Sharia) law.

However, the manner in which such laws are interpreted and applied is often inconsistent and frequently varies based on subjective considerations, particularly in cases where women seek redress for violations committed by their spouses or when intestate inheritance issues arise. This is further complicated by unwritten family customs and traditions which discriminate against women, especially in cases related to divorce, child custody and the inheritance of properties, although Islamic laws are sometimes more accommodating of women's concerns in cases pertaining to family/marital break-up.

Ensuring that laws and acts formulated to protect the rights and interests of women are enforced remains a major challenge for women's rights advocates and gender and development practitioners.

Human rights violations are prevalent in Nigeria with women's rights being violated much more often than those of men, in both the public and private spheres. To date, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), established in 1995, has not adequately fostered the capacity of key public institutions, officials and leaders to generate popular understanding and promote fundamental human rights and freedoms. The most pervasive and severe violations of women's rights are often those associated with the unwritten traditions and practices of Nigeria's numerous and diverse ethnic groups. The most common of these which adversely affect women concern widowhood rites, inheritance rights, the land tenure system, female genital mutilation/female genital circumcision (FGM/FGC) and early marriage. These practices have a devastating impact on the health and well-being of Nigerian women and girls and undermine their progress and development.

Women's participation in agriculture

Women are responsible for carrying out 70 percent of agricultural labour, 50 percent of animal husbandry-related activities and 60 percent of food processing activities. Despite the integral role that women play in the agricultural sector, their contributions are hardly valued or recognized, nor are they reflected in the National Accounting Systems or given prime consideration in agricultural policy processes. Women have access to less than 20 per cent of available agricultural resources, which is a serious impediment to their maximising agricultural production.

Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence has come to the fore as a major issue in recent times, and reflects the extent to which women's physical safety is threatened, making it difficult or impossible for some women to speak out on the issues that concern and affect their lives. Violence against women is pervasive and widespread, particularly domestic violence, wife-beating and rape, with the latter also increasing the vulnerability of women to sexually transmitted diseases in general, and HIV/AIDS in particular. In Nigeria, harmful traditional practices designed to control women's sexuality have caused great suffering. Notable among these is the practice of female genital mutilation, a violation of basic rights which can

In general, Nigeria remains a patriarchal society where men dominate all spheres of national affairs as well as women's lives

constitute a lifelong risk to women's health. Another aspect of violence against women is women trafficking.

The background to this behaviour is the belief that women are inferior and are supposed to be treated as second class citizens in society. But if Nigeria is to tap the potential of women for development, gender sensitive policies that entrench equity between men and women is key.

Equal relationships between men and women in matters of sexual relations and reproduction, including full respect for the physical integrity of the human body, requires mutual respect and willingness to accept responsibility for the consequences of sexual behaviour, while sensitivity and equity in gender relations enhances and promotes respectful and harmonious partnerships between men and women

While several states have updated their criminal laws to punish domestic violence and to treat violence against women as seriously as violence against men, others continue to apply the old Penal Code and Criminal Code, the provisions of which are clearly inadequate from a gender equality perspective. Under these out-dated laws, domestic violence is classified under common assault, which downplays the seriousness of this crime. According to section 55 of the Penal Code which applies to some states created out of the defunct Northern Region, wife beating is permitted as long as it does not amount to grievous hurt which is defined by section 241 to include emasculation, permanent loss of sight, ability to hear or speak facial disfigurement, deprivation of any member or joint, bone fracture or tooth dislocation.

Justice and law enforcement

Neither the administration of justice nor law enforcement are gender-friendly, and frequently neglect to adhere to the principle of upholding fundamental rights and good governance. The operational procedures and protocols of most law enforcement agencies are biased against women. The most striking example is the



Abike Dabiri-Erewa, Senior Special Assistant to the President on Diaspora

still un-amended 1948 Police Act. Many of its provisions violate not only the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the African Protocol on People's Rights and the Rights of Women (APPRW), but the anti-discrimination provisions enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution itself. For instance, although women have the right to post bail for police detainees, in practice women are frequently prevented from doing so on the excuse that the surety could be liable to sanctions if the bailed person absconds (although the police frequently arrest even nursing mothers to force husbands to surrender to custody).

Livelihoods

Various data indicate that a sharp contrast between the income-generating and livelihood opportunities of women and men persists across multiple sectors in Nigeria. For instance, the participation of women in the industrial sector is 11 percent compared with 30 percent for men. Women represent 87 percent of those employed in the service sector which involves predominantly informal and unregulated forms of employment. Their participation in income-generating activities that involve heavy manual labour, such as mining and quarrying, is virtually non-existent, mostly because of gender-related perceptions about the social construction of labour and production (National Bureau of Statistics, 2004). In the Federal Civil Service, which is the largest single-entity employer in Nigeria, 76 percent of civil servants are men while 24 percent are women, but women hold less than 14 percent of total management level positions in the service. In the medical field, which generally involves highly skilled and relatively well-remunerated work, women represent only 17.5 percent of those employed while men make up 82.5 percent. (CIDA Nig. GSAA 2006).

Economy

Overall, gender inequalities within society and across all sectors reflect the wide disparities between women

contributes to the feminization of poverty. Among the 70 percent of the population estimated to be living below poverty line, it is projected that over 65 percent are women. Men also have greater access to high-paying, secure employment. These disparities have a significant impact on the capacity of women and men to contribute to the economic growth of the country.

Health and HIV/AIDS

The under-representation of women in decision-making bodies and policy formulation processes also has a significant impact on the health sector's responsiveness to gender equality considerations. With the exception of reproductive health policies, the vast majority of sectoral policies and service delivery systems frequently fail to adopt gender-sensitive approaches or address gender inequalities. Ensuring access to health facilities and affordable health services remains a major challenge for the country in general, and women in particular, while doctor/patient ratios show that the health care system lacks the necessary human resources to respond to the health care needs of Nigerians.

As a direct consequence, maternal and child mortality and morbidity rates remain alarmingly high. This has serious implications for the overall health and well-being of Nigerian women and for population growth rates. The prevalence levels of communicable diseases are also high, largely as a result of poor sanitation, low awareness, and lack of access to potable water. The higher prevalence of HIV/AIDS among women is partly due to the fact that women are biologically more susceptible to contracting HIV than men. Although the government has acknowledged the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS and has developed and implemented gender-sensitive HIV/AIDS programmes, interventions, policies, and strategies (thus gender equality considerations are a central aspect of Nigeria's HIV/AIDS National Strategic Framework), significant challenges remain with respect to addressing practices that perpetuate gender inequalities, such as early marriage, transactional sex, lack of access to health information and services and women's role in shouldering the burden of care for persons living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

Problem of Child marriage

Child marriage remains a threat to the lives of children, especially girls, despite national laws prohibiting it in many countries. Child marriage correlates with lower levels of schooling, lower rates of contraceptive use, and higher fertility. Girls who marry early have little decision-making power within households, they have less control over productive assets, and the participate less in the external labour force.

Latest developments in gender equality fight

While women in Nigeria have long suffered discrimination at every level, with limited access to education, exclusion from ownership of land and property, the cheating or denial of their inheritance rights, human resources development and political rights, recent attention in the country has focused on domestic violence, in respect of which women are more likely to suffer at the hands of their intimate partners than men partly because the culture of suffering in silence is breaking down.

In 2016, Senator Abiodun Olujimi (Ekiti South) presented the "Gender Parity and Prohibition of Violence against Women" Bill. She told the Senate that its purpose was to give women equal rights in marriage, education and employment, and explained that if the Bill was enacted, a widow in Nigeria would automatically become the custodian of her children in the event of the death of her husband, and would also inherit his property.

At first, the Bill was rejected when the Senate accepted the arguments of some lawmakers that the Nigerian constitution already established the rights of all persons, including women, that the Bill was "anti-religion" and that it went against African culture and tradition. However, after this rejection was greeted with outrage and derision, the Bill was reworked to take account of some of the concerns raised. It has since passed its second reading and has been referred to the Committee on Judiciary, Human Rights and Legal Matters.

The initial fate of the Bill highlighted that although gender equality has been declared as "not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world" some men in positions of leadership and power in Nigeria still perceive women as inferior to men.

It is therefore not surprising that in the Global Gender Gap Report (GGGR) compiled by the World Economic Forum (WEF) to track the progress of countries on gender equality, out of 144 countries monitored, Nigeria ranked 118. The report stated that the gap between women and men in four key areas in Nigeria, namely health, education, economy and politics, is still relatively wide.

Nigerian women and gender equality

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 on Gender Equality aims to empower women and girls to reach their full potential. It requires the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence – including harmful practices – against them and seeks to ensure that they have every opportunity for sexual and reproductive health and rights, that they receive due recognition for their unpaid work, have full access to productive resources, and enjoy equal participation with men in political, economic and public life.

Although there has been progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment in some developing countries, relatively little improvement has been recorded in Nigeria.

Enrolment in school

Nonetheless, the NBS 2015 Statistical Report of Men and Women in Nigeria showed a slight improvement in girls' access to education, as female enrolment in primary schools increased from 45.7 percent in 2010 to 48.6 percent in 2015. The percentage of females enrolled in secondary schools increased from 45.3 percent in 2010 to 45.7 percent in 2015 and the completion rate for girls in primary and secondary schools increased from 46.7 percent and 47.1 percent in 2010 to 48.3 percent and 47.9 percent respectively in 2015. (See Table 1)

Yakubu Dogara, the Speaker of the House of Representatives has advised that Nigeria must invest heavily in girl-child education to bridge the gap in school enrolment statistics between boys and girls, and to end

the disparity in levels of literacy. He maintained that gender should not restrict the dreams and aspirations of millions of "our daughters, so we all must be bold for change and support the women around us to achieve their goals and maximise their potential and talents".

Gender-based violence has come to the fore as a major issue in recent times, and reflects the extent to which women's physical safety is threatened

Forms of violence

Violence against women and girls violates their human rights and hinders development.

Physical violence: Data compiled by NBS between 2008 to 2013, shows that women in the 25-29 years age group experienced the highest levels of physical violence, 23.8 percent in 2008, decreasing to 21.1 percent in 2013. At 22.6 percent, high levels were also recorded among the 30-39 years age in 2008. These two age groups (25-29 and 30-39) had the same levels of physical violence, 23.8 percent, in both 2008 and 2013. At 2.5 percent, sexual violence was highest for the 20-24 years age group in 2008, decreasing to 2.1 percent in 2013.

Domestic violence: Sustained agitation by non-governmental organisations has recently prompted greater media reporting of domestic violence against women, leading to calls for urgent attention to address the trend. The CLEEN Foundation recently renewed its call on lawmakers and security agencies to curb the rate at which women and girls suffer domestic and sexual violence.

Female genital mutilation: Concerning the harmful practice of female genital mutilation (FGM/cutting), which is another human rights violation and form of violence against girls and women, statistics from the Nigeria Demographic and Health Surveys for 2008 and 2013 indicate that of the total number of women who have undergone FGM, most experienced it when they were less than five years old, compared to those who were circumcised when they were older than five.

Child marriage: Report by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) shows that an average of 11.6 percent of adolescent girls aged 15-19 are married in Nigeria. Twenty-three percent of this age group are already mothers or pregnant with their first child, while 47.6

Table 1

Total Enrolment in Secondary Schools by Year and Sex		
Year	Male	Female
2010	3,980,621	3,303,022
2011	4,341,694	3,564,982
2012	5,003,301	3,975,671
2013	5,177,358	4,651,882
2014	6,339,001	4,975,671
2015	6,358,177	5,351,882

percent of these girls have no primary education.

There are wide variations in the incidence of child marriage across the country. The Minister of Women Affairs and Development, Senator Aisha Alhassan, has expressed concern at the high prevalence of child marriage in the North-east and North-west geo-political zones of Nigeria. Indeed, Senator Alhassan asserted that Northern Nigeria has one of the highest rates of early marriage in the world with an estimated 65 percent of children married off before the age of 18 years. It should be noted that the same areas where there are high levels of child marriage also suffer from high rates of poverty, high rates of maternal mortality, and low levels of literacy.

Human trafficking: Human trafficking disproportionately affects women and girls, since 70 percent of all victims detected worldwide are female. From 2010 to 2015, females trafficked reached the highest proportion (79.8 percent) of trafficked persons in 2012, but reduced to 58.9 percent in 2015. Trafficking in persons occurred most in the 26-35 years age bracket where females constituted over 90.0 percent of the total trafficked, followed by the 16-25 years age group of which females accounted for 88.7 percent of the total number of persons trafficked in 2012. The proportion of females in the 0-5 years age group increased from 48.5 percent of the total number trafficked in 2010, to 53.8 percent in 2012, and dropped to 42.4 percent in 2015. (See table)

The circumstances under which Nigerian girls find themselves in the hands of traffickers, leaves cause for concern, although the Nigerian authorities are now becoming more proactive about preventing the scourge. For example, on the 28th of February 2017, 41 teenage girls were evacuated from Mali to Nigeria. Abike Dabiri-Erewa, the Senior Special Assistant to the President on the Diaspora, revealed that their evacuation had been carried out by the joint efforts of the Chief of Defence Staff, the Nigerian Air Force, the National Agency for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) and other relevant

remarkable.

However, in Nigeria, women are under-represented among high-ranking government administrators with decision making powers.

Nigeria's first female Professor of History, Bolanle Awe decried this trend at a programme to commemorate the International Women's Day:

"The majority of women in political parties do not have power, as majority of them are praise singers, fund raisers, cheer leaders, party supporters, mobilizers. They are dressed in the latest aso-ebi (uniforms) to raise songs and dances. And when the time comes for eating, they will be at the forefront."

Professor Awe accused Nigeria's government of not showing the required commitment to drive gender equality in the executive and legislative arms, noting that from 1999 to 2007, there were only three female Senators, compared to 106 male Senators. She called for strong collaborative efforts amongst women to boost participation in politics, economic activities and policy-making.

Economic activity

In Nigeria, where women already constitute a significant part of the informal sector, it is expected that gender equality would produce greater gains for the country's economy. While Nigeria was found to have a relatively high level of gender equality in work - comparable to those found in Ethiopia and Thailand - gender parity in other areas such as access to essential services, enablers of economic opportunity and legal protections for women, was far lower.

UN's partnership with Sweden and Canada to stop child brides in Nigeria

With 23 million girls and women who were married in their childhood, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) refers to Nigeria as "the home of child marriages in Africa." A UNICEF report titled "A Profile of Child Marriage in Africa" stated that:

"Girls in rural areas are twice as likely to become child brides as girls from urban areas. Similarly, girls from the poorest households are twice likely to marry before age 18 as girls from richest households".

The UNICEF report noted that if child marriage continues at the current rate (out of 124 million children forced into early marriage in Africa, Nigeria has over 40 million), the African continent would have as many as 310 million child brides by 2050.

Research conducted by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) shows that the average marriage age for girls in rural Nigeria is 17 years.

To address this problem, in late 2016, the United Nations together with other development partners led by the governments of Canada and Sweden joined the Nigerian government to launch a strategy document seeking to end child marriage in Nigeria by 2030.

The goal of the new policy, launched in Abuja by Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, is that a girl must reach 18 years before she can be married, with measures to reduce child marriage by 40 percent by 2020.

Christopher Thornley, the Canadian High

While progress towards parity in primary school education has been recorded over the last decade, there remains a significant wage and labour force participation gender gap

government agencies.

Dabiri-Erewa revealed that before the evacuation, NAPTIP officials had travelled to Mali to arrange documentation and other logistics to ease the return of the 41 girls, who she said were victims of trafficking.

Participation in government

Globally, the participation of women in the legislature rose to 23 percent in 2016. This represented a six percent increase over the previous decade. The slow progress in this area makes the increase in the number of women in leadership positions in the legislature all the more



Christopher Thornley, Canadian High Commissioner to Nigeria

Commissioner to Nigeria said:

"In Nigeria, there are more child brides than any other country. There is massive number of young girls being married in this country as children. When you think of the millions of girls who are affected, all those individual stories and the stories behind the numbers, there is a challenge that appears to be overwhelming."

However, he noted, many people around the world are coming together in an unprecedented way to put a stop to child marriage.

Among the root causes of the practice of early and forced child marriage are the lack of full access to education for girls, and lack of commitment to their retention in education; the quality of access to sexuality education and life skills; household poverty; gender stereotypes; insecurity and abusive culture and traditions.

UNFPA said that the strategic plan to end child marriage in Nigeria would ensure the necessary governance, the right policy, a conducive environment and a sensitized judiciary for the enforcement of

measures if the country is to make progress in the achievement of the SDGs.

Although the Nigerian Constitution did not establish any minimum age for marriage, the Child Rights Act (CRA) of 2003 sets the minimum age for marriage at 18 years. Out of 36 State Houses of Assembly, 24 have adopted the Act as law. However, as at 2016, Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Enugu, Gombe, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara were yet to adopt CRA, meaning that in some of these states, the minimum age of marriage can be as low as 12.

Implementation of the CRA, which forbids child marriage and at the same time protects the rights of the child and protects the child from violence and abuse is an important tool in Nigeria's efforts to meet SDG-5.

IWD: Nigerian women charged to embrace the changing world

International Women's Day (IWD) is celebrated on the 8th of March each year to commemorate the struggle for women's rights. The theme of IWD in 2017 was: "Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50:50 by 2030" indicates that realizing women's economic empowerment requires transformative change so that prosperity is equitably shared and no one is left behind.

In a statement released to mark the IWD, the wife of the Nigerian President, Aisha Buhari, appealed to all stakeholders to work to ensure the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, as this would aid attainment of the SDGs.

Mrs Buhari also used the opportunity to reaffirm her commitment to the cause of women through her "Future Assured" initiative from which thousands of women and children have benefitted.

Vice President Yemi Osinbajo disclosed that the Buhari administration remains committed to ensuring the protection of all women from all forms of gender-based violence in the country. He said Nigerian women will live to fulfil their aspirations in a peaceful and prosperous country.

The Director-General of the National Agency for the Control of AIDS, Sani Aliyu, said that gender inequality issues are key drivers of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in

Table 2

Distribution of Trafficked Persons by Age Groups and Sex 2010 - 2015

Age Group	2010		2011			2012			2013			2014			2015		
0 – 5	35	48.5	27	28	50.9	24	28	53.8	9	3	25	38	32	45.7	49	36	42.2
6 – 15	114	67.3	95	201	67.9	77	167	68.4	345	145	29.6	101	245	70.8	245	354	59.1
16 – 25	96	79.6	92	386	80.8	43	337	88.7	127	265	67.6	134	497	78.8	155	233	60.1
26 – 35	24	74.7	49	75	60.5	5	49	90.7	14	39	73.6	15	56	78.9	34	58	63
36 & Above	3	82.4	0	5	100	2	6	75	5	12	70.6	8	26	76.5	11	26	70.3
Unclassified	7	50	7	11	61.1	0	11	100	0	0	0	0	11	100	0	0	0
Total	279	72.5	270	706	72.3	151	598	79.8	500	464	48.1	296	867	74.5	494	707	59.9

Source: NAPTIP

several ways as women currently constitute 59 percent of HIV positive individuals in Nigeria. He encouraged women to be bold on IWD and beyond, by taking bold steps to speed up gender parity and truly drive the greatest change for women.

The African Development Bank (AfDB) partnered with the Nigerian Ministry of Women Affairs and several development partners (UN-Women, United Nations Development Programme, Oxfam, the European Union, Action Aid, and others) to celebrate IWD with a knowledge-sharing event.

Several presentations were made by experts to set the tone for dialogue in search of proactive, innovative ways of bridging gender gaps in the workplace by creating an enabling environment for women to thrive. The status of the Gender and Equal Opportunity Bill, creating safe cities, inclusive representation in parliament, expanding livelihood programmes and rapid response to humanitarian crises were topics at the forefront of the day's discussions.

There is no doubt that the ambitious scope of SDG5 represents a new window of opportunity for Nigeria to

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



The challenges of Decent Work and Economic Growth in Nigeria



Dr Chris Ngige, Minister of Labour and Employment

A MAJOR thrust of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by world leaders during the 70th General Assembly of the United Nations in New York in September 2015 was the need to do more to empower individuals through decent work.

Indeed, the importance of 'Decent Work and Economic Growth' was underscored by its inclusion in the SDGs. Occupying number 8, it targets the build-up of decent work and economic growth in society through the promotion of development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation.

There is no doubt that SDG-8 - which is geared towards promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable

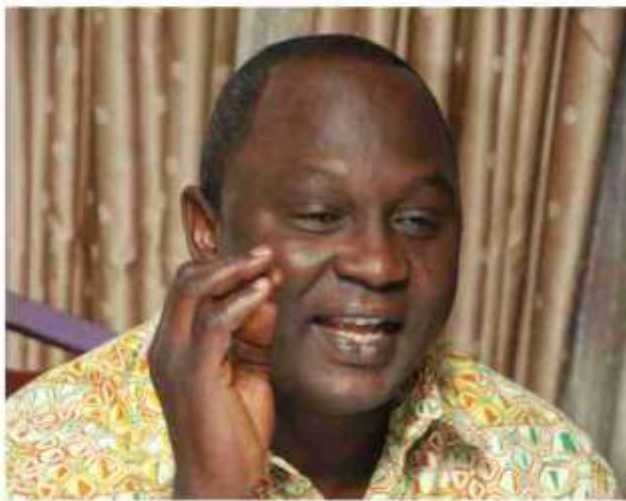
employment and decent work for all is meant to set a new path to economic growth and development for a country like Nigeria which has 112.519 million people living in poverty and over 20 million people without jobs.

As one of the world leaders who endorsed SDG-8, President Muhammadu Buhari has expressed the commitment of his administration to job creation and the provision of decent employment opportunities for Nigerians within the productive age range. The Nigerian leader realises that decent work is central to poverty reduction and is a means of achieving equitable, inclusive and sustainable development. He has therefore promised that Nigeria will strive to attain the targets of SDG-8.

SDG-8 targets

In essence, the targets for SDG-8 are as follows:

- To sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 percent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries.
- Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors.
- Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.
- Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, with developed countries taking the lead.



Comrade Ayuba Wabba, President, Nigeria Labour Congress, NLC

- By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.
- By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.
- Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.
- Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.
- By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.
- Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all.
- Increase Aid for Trade support for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries.
- By 2020, develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization.

Pillars of decent work

The concept of decent work is generally accepted as covering a wide range of issues which can be organised under four 'pillars', namely:

- **Employment creation and enterprise development**
- **Social protection**

- **Standards and rights at work**
- **Governance and social dialogue**

Decent work deficits in Nigeria

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the concept of "decent work" involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, coupled with active participation in decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

Decent work, a tool for poverty reduction and equitable globalization, is achieved through the four strategic pillars earlier outlined – employment creation, rights at work, social protection and social dialogue, with gender equality as a crosscutting objective. Decent work is central to peoples' welfare as it provides income, paves the way for broader social and economic advancement and strengthens individuals, their families and communities. Decent work is linked to the concept of human development – a process of enabling choices, freedom to live one's value and manage one's affairs – the key indicators of which are long and healthy life, education and a decent standard of living. These indicators are usually measured by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index.

However, over the years, despite the fact that Nigeria has ratified ILO conventions that deal with the rights of the worker in the workplace – indeed, has enshrined some of its provisions into the 1999 Constitution – the observance of some of the rights have been weak. Workers in the country have been subjected to all manner of indecent treatment. According to Dung Pam Sha, a professor of Political Economy and Development Studies at the University of Jos, the government, transnational corporations, global financial institutions, global trading institutions as well as local private employers who are supposed to respect these rights, are the key violators.

Consequently, Nigeria has continued to record decent work deficits which include employment and labour market deficits, labour standards deficits, deficits in social protection, labour administration deficits, and social dialogue deficits.

Employment and labour market deficits

Nigeria has had a decade of jobless growth in which years of economic growth have not translated to more employment opportunities or poverty alleviation. With regard to employment, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), Nigeria's core strategy to fight poverty and improve incomes, noted that the economy had experienced growth without any commensurate increase in job opportunities.

The labour force in Nigeria has not reflected the impressive level of economic growth experienced from 2005 to 2013. While the economy recorded an average of 9.8 percent growth in its GDP per annum between 2008 and 2010, the official unemployment rate for the working population ranged from 12 to 15 percent between 2002 and 2007. This trend of "jobless growth" was captured in the 2009 World Bank report on Employment and Growth



Comrade Issa Aremu, General Secretary, National Union of Garment and Textile Workers Union of Nigeria (NUTGTWN)

In Nigeria. Today, half of the country's 170 million people live in urban areas with high rates of unemployment. The high level of unemployment was demonstrated when about 18 job seekers died and many were injured during a nationwide recruitment test conducted by the Nigeria Immigration Service in March 2014.

Poverty has been exacerbated by the persistently high unemployment levels. With a female unemployment rate of 12-14 percent, women experience more joblessness than their male counterparts whose rate of unemployment falls within the range of 10-12 percent. At 45.6 percent, youth unemployment rates are twice as high as the national average of 24 percent.

According to a recent report by the National Bureau of

rose from 13.3 percent in the second quarter, to 13.9 percent in the third quarter of that year – an increase of 555,311 persons. According to the report, the under-employment rate rose from 19.3 percent in second quarter to 19.7 percent in the third quarter. The report said that the term unemployment covered persons (aged 15-64) who were available for work or actively seeking for work but were without work during the reference period. It defined 'under-employment' as when, on average, a person works more than 20 hours a week, but less than 40 hours, which is full time employment. It explained that underemployment could also happen if a person works full time but is engaged in an activity that under utilises his/her skills, time or educational qualifications.

However, the report stated that the economically active population or working age population (persons aged 15-64) increased from 106.69 million in second quarter to 108.03 million in the third quarter. "This represents a 1.26 percent increase over the previous quarter and a 3.57 percent increase when compared to the third quarter of 2015." In the third quarter of 2016, the labour force increased to 80.67 million from 79.9 million in second quarter. This represents an increase of 0.98 percent. Within the reference period, the total number of persons in full time employment (who did any form of work for at least 40 hours) decreased by 272,499 or 0.51 percent. The report stated that with an economically active or working age population (108.03 million) and labour force population (80.67 million), 27.36million persons within the economically active or working age population decided not to work for one reason or the other in the third quarter, hence they were not part of the labour force and could not be considered unemployed. According to the report, there have been eight consecutive rises in the unemployment rate since the fourth quarter of 2014.

The increase in the unemployment rate is attributed to a number of factors, chief among which are the increased number of school graduates with no matching job opportunities, a freeze in employment by institutions, the

NIGERIA UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



SOURCE: WWW.TRADINGECONOMICS.COM | NATIONAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS, NIGERIA

crash in the capital market and continued job losses in the manufacturing and oil sectors.

Another contributing factor to the unemployment situation is the limited employability of the workforce. This is due to the fact that graduates and young people lack training opportunities, and to the level of skill required in the world of work. Apart from this, the training available and the curricula of technical vocational institutions are obsolete and do not reflect current market requirements.

Employment and human resource planning functions are also inadequately developed to equip the nation to face the challenges of the present labour market. According to Sola Fajana, a Professor of Labour and Human Resource Management, and Vice Chancellor, Joseph Ayo of Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji in Osun State, the decent work deficits in the area of unemployment centres largely on how to eliminate the large scale underemployment that leads to poverty, especially among youths and women. "The ineffectiveness of previous policy measures to make any significant impact on this serious socio-economic and psychological malaise suggests new policy directions and strategies underpinned by effective policy implementation," Fajana said.

Fajana added that other unemployment-related work deficit issues which require attention are: managing the imbalance between the demand and supply of labour of all ages; addressing the low quality of work and pay which underemployment accentuates; redressing the structural imbalance in the access to jobs among older and young job seekers; and improving the employability of graduates who lack market-ready skills and competences.

To close the gaps in skills between the programmes of educational institutions and the requirements of the workplace, Remi Dairo, President of the Institute of Productivity and Business Innovation Management said that the government needs to restructure the educational system to meet the present and future needs of the labour market in the country.

Labour standards deficits

Nigeria has ratified a total of 40 ILO conventions, of which 35 are currently in force, including all eight core conventions. However, the country is yet to ratify a number of conventions that are crucial to addressing decent work deficits in the labour market and the critical challenge of poverty and social exclusion, particularly within the context of prevailing economic difficulties. These include ILO conventions C122, C129, C150, C187 and C188 that relate to labour market governance, C102 on social security, C181 on Private Employment Agencies and C189 on Domestic Workers. Even though Nigeria ratified the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 in 2013, it has not been domesticated. The implementation of ratified conventions has not always been effective owing to capacity challenges in ensuring compliance with such commitments, and lack of adequate awareness of the provisions of such conventions. According to Fajana, "Nigeria has continually been carpeted by ILO for flagrant violation of trade union rights."

Besides, some labour laws that were reviewed more than a decade ago are still pending at the National Assembly.

Experts in labour and industrial relations believe that it is necessary to review the list of ILO instruments ratified by Nigeria. It has also become imperative to enhance the effective implementation of ratified instruments if the country is to plug the labour standards deficits since they are of the view that some of the deficits of decent work and pay can be minimised through effective labour laws.

Deficits in social protection

The social protection model adopted by Nigeria in 2005 declares that the goal of social protection in the country "is to reduce poverty and protect vulnerable groups through effective and sustainable management mechanism."

The specific objectives are to:

- Assist the population who are poor to get out of poverty;
- Protect the vulnerable against poverty;
- Provide income support to the poorest, especially the sick, disabled and retirees;
- Increase the enrolment and attendance rates of poor students in school;
- Address short-term employment needs by developing skills and competences.

However, several components of the social protection model are yet to be fully deployed in Nigeria. The country has not lived up to expectation when it comes to enacting and implementing policies which provide a safety net that will reduce the level of risk to workers' lives, health and well-being, as well as offer social security and address HIV/AIDS.

The plight of people aged 60 and above who have retired from formal salary or wage employment, self-employment or other forms of work such as small scale farmers and artisans, is pitiable. This is due to historical neglect revealed by the absence of any meaningful policy or practice of social security for this group of Nigerians. Indirectly, this puts the welfare of several other dependants who rely on the fortune of these retirees to eke out a living for themselves in jeopardy. Since Nigeria slipped into economic recession in the second quarter of 2016, pensioners in many states of the federation are being owed arrears of their pension payments, but it is not only the pensioners who suffer as a result, but their immediate families and dependants.

The situation is the same for informal sector workers who account for about 70 percent of the workforce in Nigeria. The future and retirement life of most of these workers who have no organised pension plan remains a cause for concern.

In terms of protection for the vulnerable, the country has not fared better. For example, there are no unemployment benefits for persons with disabilities.

Nigeria's HIV epidemic is described as generalised (above one percent prevalence among those attending antenatal care facilities) with a wide variation of prevalence within the country. The figure given for Nigerians living with HIV/AIDS - 3,459,363 - out of an estimated total population of 170 million Nigerians, means that Nigeria has the second highest HIV burden in the world and the largest in the West African sub-region. The 2012 estimate showed an adult prevalence of 4.1 per

cent. However, the 2015 report by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA) showed that HIV among adults in the country was 3.1 or 3.2 million people.

In 2013, the ILO supported the Nigerian government and its social partners to revise its out-dated National Workplace Policy on HIV and AIDS and its implementation guidelines to meet the International Labour Standard concerning HIV and AIDS. Although a national workplace policy on HIV and AIDS exists, there is no comprehensive programme on HIV and AIDS which covers all elements of the world of work.

Deficits identified include the continued stigma and discrimination against those infected and affected by HIV as well as lack of HIV and AIDS interventions that are tailored for the workplace and focused on vulnerable sectors.

Other identified decent work deficits in the area of social protection include: a limited social security system that caters only for workers in the formal sector; an inadequate pension system; lack of any social welfare system for senior citizens, the younger generation or people living with HIV; the neglect of persons with disabilities and lack of unemployment benefits for them; and the rudimentary nature of child social protection schemes.

Besides, Nigeria is a source, transit, and destination country for women and children trafficked for the purposes of forced labour and commercial sexual exploitation. Within Nigeria, women and girls are trafficked for domestic servitude and commercial sexual exploitation. Women and girls are also trafficked from Nigeria to Europe through Libya, Morocco, and Algeria, primarily for the purpose of sexual exploitation. While Italy is the primary European destination country for Nigerian victims, other destinations include Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium and Norway. A

2010 survey of the National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) showed that over 10,000 Nigerians were engaged in prostitution in Italy, constituting 60 percent of all prostitutes in the Italian sex market.

Child labour is most predominant in Nigeria among African nations, with an average of 28.8 percent of the under-15 years population engaged in child labour. In many parts of the country, boys are trafficked for forced labour in street vending, agriculture, mining, stone quarries and as domestic servants. In Northern Nigeria, religious teachers traffic boys, called almajiri, for forced begging.

Labour administration deficits

Labour is within the purview of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment. The objective of labour administration is to strengthen labour standards and practice in all sectors, especially in the weak sectors, to ensure minimum levels of protection for vulnerable groups. Thus all aspects of the ministry's mandate are covered in labour administration.

However, there are major gaps in achieving the goals that labour administration espouses. Decent work deficits in labour administration include capacity gaps in training for factory and labour inspection, and in funding of monitoring services. Until recently, factory and labour inspection continued to attract very low budgetary allocations in spite of Nigeria's ratification of Convention 81 on labour inspection.

Infringement of freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining has become more rampant. Often, victimised groups do not seek state intervention, because – especially in the informal economy – they fear further victimization by the employer. The Ministry of Labour and Employment appears to lack the capacity to sanction offending employers, and indeed, its structure and processes suggest that the ministry has neither the mandate nor the capacity to sanction factory owners with substandard labour practices.

Professor Fajana, a scholar of labour and human resource management, suggests that “more than ever before, labour administration today needs appropriate re-engineering to assist in the optimization of decent work services to its stakeholders.”

Social dialogue deficits

The social dialogue pillar in Nigeria consists of a network of actors and the institutions they have established for the promotion of joint discussion, negotiation or determination of issues that confront the social partners either within the

Labour force statistics Q2, 2016) Source: National Bureau of Statistics

LABOUR FORCE STATISTICS, 2016 Q2										
	LABOUR FORCE POPULATION	Work 40 Hrs+	Work 20-39 Hrs	Work 1-19 Hrs	Work 0 Hr (Did nothing)	Total Unemployed	UNEMPLOYMENT RATES			Under Employment Rate
		Fully Employed	Under-employed	Unemployed	Unemployed		Old Nigeria	New Nigeria	International	
All Groups	79,886,310	53,626,608	15,445,717	4,879,793	5,766,191	10,643,984	32.6	33.3	7.2	19.3
Educational Group										
Never Attended	23,603,667	13,478,766	5,266,731	1,975,357	1,581,823	3,157,180	35.7	33.4	6.7	22.3
Below primary	550,858	396,694	55,737	4,304	55,624	105,928	18.6	18.7	10.0	9.9
Primary	15,602,434	11,895,152	2,746,099	723,134	738,030	1,461,164	23.8	9.4	4.7	14.4
Secondary	27,808,945	18,810,950	5,812,335	1,462,643	1,718,017	3,180,660	32.4	12.4	6.2	20.9
Post Secondary	11,816,474	7,045,046	2,030,316	1,070,355	1,670,697	2,741,052	40.4	23.2	14.1	12.2
Age group										
15-24	16,123,471	6,730,306	5,521,020	1,820,893	1,051,253	3,872,146	58.3	24.0	12.7	34.2
25-34	23,445,677	15,273,021	4,811,395	1,506,623	1,904,628	3,411,251	35.1	14.5	8.1	20.5
35-44	19,054,003	14,988,594	2,514,711	736,188	815,010	1,551,198	21.3	8.1	4.3	13.2
45-54	13,395,193	10,776,823	1,523,269	500,779	610,821	1,111,100	19.6	8.3	4.6	11.9
55-64	7,663,966	5,909,854	1,055,822	315,810	382,470	698,290	22.9	9.1	5.0	13.8
Gender										
Male	40,845,504	29,453,918	6,698,271	2,117,081	1,576,233	4,693,314	27.9	11.5	6.3	16.4
Female	38,840,806	24,172,690	8,747,446	2,762,712	3,189,958	5,950,670	37.8	15.3	8.2	22.4
Place of Residence										
Urban	25,144,152	18,247,892	2,421,956	1,081,924	3,392,380	4,474,304	27.4	12.8	13.5	9.6
Rural	54,542,158	35,378,716	12,993,761	3,797,870	2,371,811	6,169,680	35.1	11.3	4.3	23.8

place of work, or even outside it when the object is the resolutions of identified conflicts.

In terms of workers' organizations, there are two main umbrella bodies in Nigeria – the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC).

Forms of social dialogue in Nigeria include collective bargaining, which is bipartite, and cooperation among government, employers' organizations and workers' organizations in formulating or implementing labour, social or economic policy, which is tripartite. Tripartite-plus dialogue involves all stakeholders such as the host community, non-governmental agencies, civil society and the three arms of government (executive, legislative and the judiciary) as well as workers' organizations and employers' organizations.

Other efforts at social dialogue involve the Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA) which has been conducting seminars and training programmes on business development and growth as well as labour market dialogues. Collective bargaining is quite effective in Nigeria, especially in the private sector where trade unions and employers or employers' associations have shown a visible commitment to the sanctity of collective agreements.

However, the system of collective bargaining in the public sector does not encourage appointed bargaining agents to secure firm commitment from their government counterparts by signing draft agreements. This often leads to delay in the ratification process, with resulting social dialogue deficits.

The Labour movement and the demand for decent work

International Labour Organisation (ILO) statistics indicate that worldwide, one worker dies every 15 seconds, 6,000 workers die every day, and more than two million workers die annually as a result of work-related accidents and diseases.

These grim and unacceptable statistics are unlikely to improve, as technological and social changes are aggravating existing health hazards and creating new risks.

The situation is not different in Nigeria. Many employers of labour in the country violate the Factories Act Cap F1 LFN 2004 on Occupational Safety and Health at work places. Analysts are of the view that the work environment has become more precarious for workers in different sectors of the Nigerian economy. In recent years, there have been several cases where workers complain of being subjected to precarious work conditions by their employers. In May, 2014, bottling operations at the Benin plant of the Nigerian Bottling Company (NBC) were abruptly halted by casual workers, following the death of one of their colleagues, Jerry Ayo, after a work related accident. The angry workers completely shut the plant, barricading the company's gates and lighting bonfires.

In September 2015, there were gory reports of death in a Chinese-owned firm, Hongxing Steel Company Limited, in the Amuwo Odofin area of Lagos State. While Emeka Umoh died when liquefied iron spilled on his body while he was on duty on September 23, 2015, another worker, Adebayo Ajiboye, died after being crushed by a compressor in February 2015. Against a background of complaints of being forced to work under conditions akin to slavery, the management's decision to take his body to a morgue with a



Dennis Zulu, Director, International Labour Organization (ILO) office for Nigeria

tipper led to a confrontation with the workers who alleged that Umoh and Ajiboye were just two of many Nigerian workers in the firm who had died or sustained permanent disability due to accidents on duty. They complained that such accidents were regular occurrences due to faulty machines and the absence of safety standards.

In addition to job insecurity and unfair labour practices by employers, the lack of decent and safe working environment has been a major concern for the labour movement in Nigeria. Indeed, it was the main focus of the NLC and the TUC during the annual World Day for Decent Work held on October 7 globally. For the 2015 event, the NLC President, Comrade Ayuba Wabba, left Abuja for Lagos to campaign against anti-labour practices. He picketed some companies accused of not providing a decent work environment, including the Egbin Power Station Plc., Vik Limited, Jagal Limited, Lee Group, Dura Pack Limited and Coates Limited. Later, speaking at a rally to mark Decent Work Day, Wabba said that the companies were picketed so that they could be put on their toes on the need to respect labour laws. He said that the level of precariousness in the work environment in some organisations was intolerable and that efforts were being made to address the problem, noting that Nigerian workers, as the creators of the nation's wealth, deserve the best in terms of decent work and welfare.

Comrade Issa Aremu, General Secretary of the National Union of Garment and Textile Workers of Nigeria (NUTGTWN), who is also the Vice President of the Geneva-based Industrial Global Union, deplored the growing level of casualization, outsourcing and other practices, which he said, are calculated to debase Nigerian workers.

During the 2016 'World Decent Work Day' held in Abuja, NLC President Wabba reiterated the determination of the labour movement to collectively end corporate greed, so that there would be shared posterity. "We therefore affirm that no matter what, decent work must be at centre of government actions to bring back economic growth to our country."

Wabba further described the national minimum wage of N18,000 per month, as "paltry", saying that it had further impoverished the Nigerian worker. As a result, the NLC had submitted a request for an upward review of

the National Minimum Wage which was signed into law by former President Goodluck Jonathan in 2011. The labour unions are demanding for a minimum wage of N56,000 per month. Wabba said that since the minimum wage was due for renegotiation after five years, the Buhari administration should undertake the necessary upward review of Nigerian workers' emoluments, which had been seriously diminished by the prevailing economic recession in the country.

Wabba further described the national minimum wage of N18,000 per month, as "paltry", saying that it had further impoverished the Nigerian worker

Buhari administration's decent work and economic growth agenda

In accordance with President Buhari's pledge that his administration would be committed to job creation and the provision of decent employment opportunities for Nigerians of productive age, the Ministry of Labour and Employment has been working to ensure an inclusive national employment policy.

The Minister of Labour and Employment, Dr. Chris Ngige, said that the ILO's Decent Work Agenda (DWA) has received widespread endorsement, and that based on this, the Nigerian government has been collaborating with the ILO through the Decent Work Country Programme Declaration (DWCP II) to produce a fair framework and globalized plan of action.

The Declaration expresses the universality of the DWA: all members of the ILO must pursue policies based on the four strategic objectives - employment, social protection, social dialogue and rights at work. The Declaration urges a holistic and integrated approach by observing that these objectives are "inseparable, interrelated and mutually supportive," stressing that upholding international labour standards is a significant means of achieving all of the strategic objectives.

Dr. Ngige commented on the Declaration saying that "DWCP II contains a range of strategic interventions that will support national initiatives aimed at reducing decent work deficits and strengthening national capacities for effective programme delivery"

Deploring the high rate of unemployment and the adverse effect on development when a nation's productive human capacity was excluded, the Minister said that a review of the National Employment Policy (NEP) was necessary.

The collaboration between the Federal Government and ILO on the DWA resulted in Nigeria's validation of the NEP on October 27, 2016.

The Permanent Secretary in the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, Dr. Clement Iloh, said that the reviewed NEP is an off-shoot of the first National Policy on Employment which had been approved by the Federal Executive Council in 2002 with the objectives of promoting job creation as a priority in national, economic and social policy; safeguarding the basic rights and

interest of workers; stimulating economic growth and development; as well as eradicating poverty and improving the living standards of citizens.

Mr. Dennis Zulu, the Director of the ILO Country Office for Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and ECOWAS Liaison Office expressed confidence that the reviewed employment policy would enhance a coherent, integrated and sustainable multi-sectoral response to combat the challenges of unemployment, noting that under the DWA, the focus is not only on creating jobs, but on creating quality jobs.

Zulu appealed to the Nigerian government to ratify the ILO Convention 122 since the reviewed NEP was already in line with the objectives of the Convention. He advised that a possible first step towards implementing the policy would be to integrate employment goals and targets in national development frameworks. This would need to be supported by multi-component and coordinated employment approach, negotiated by tripartite constituents and integrated in the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). He emphasized the need for institutional coordination, an effective accountability system, and pro-employment budgeting that put employment at the core of national budgetary policy.

In its 2015 Child Labour Report, the United States Department of Labour commented on the progress made by Nigeria in strengthening the framework to stem the scourge of Child Labour and Human Trafficking. Presenting the report to Dr. Ngige in October 2016, the Department's Representative, Marlin Hardinger, explained that the report's review of child labour developments in 142 countries had found "moderate advancement" in Nigeria's efforts to tackle the problem.

Receiving the report, Ngige challenged the accuracy of some of its conclusions. The Minister emphatically rejected the aspect of the report that blacklisted Nigeria as engaging in "child soldiering," attributing this scourge to the desperate activities of the Boko Haram insurgents whom he described as terrorists whose activities cannot in any way be ascribed to the government of Nigeria.

Acknowledging the report's criticism of child labour in other sectors such as agriculture, gold mining and construction, as well as the social malaise of begging and scavenging, the Minister restated that the involvement of children in these occupations arose partly from cultural practices, but was mostly the consequence of poverty and poor education, problems with which many African countries are grappling.

In an effort to effectively implement its decent work and economic growth agenda, on the 5th of April, 2017 the Buhari administration launched its economic blueprint, which - by leveraging on the ingenuity and resilience of its citizens - was designed to bequeath a more diversified and inclusive economy to Nigeria by 2020. The economic blueprint "Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP)", entails the creation of new jobs and projects an increase from 1.5 million new jobs in 2017 to 3.8 million, 4.3 million and 5.1 million jobs in 2018, 2019 and 2020 respectively.

The Nigerian government intends to build upon the achievements that it expects to record in the creation of decent jobs through its new economic blueprint, in working towards meeting the target of SDG-8 by 2030. ■



Reducing Inequality: Nigeria's Scorecard

THE 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development formally adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, places on the Nigerian government and development stakeholders the sacred responsibility of taking desired policy actions that will help the country tackle poverty and reduce inequality. The implication is that Nigeria's aim of meeting the SDGs by 2030 will not be achieved unless it tackles the growing economic inequality and poverty within its society. Sustainable Development Goal number 10 focuses on reducing inequality in a variety of contexts: income inequality within a country, as well as inequality by gender, age, disability, race, class, ethnicity, religion, and opportunity. SDG-10 is also designed to tackle inequality among countries in terms of voice, migration, and international aid.

SDG-10 mandates UN member countries, including Nigeria, to ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and by promoting appropriate legislation and actions, adopting policies – especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies – to progressively achieve greater equality.

SDG-10 is also geared towards ensuring that by 2030, every country must have progressively achieved sustainable income growth for the bottom 40 percent of the population at a rate higher than the national average; and must have empowered and promoted the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

SDG-10 also enjoins the UN to collaborate with member countries to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies. Specifically, there should be effective implementation of the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, in accordance with the World Trade Organization agreements. The transaction cost for migrant remittances should be reduced to less than three percent, and remittance corridors with costs higher than five percent should be eliminated by 2030.

Reducing inequality as government's priority

Nigerian governments have always claimed that reducing economic inequality and widespread poverty is a top priority. Every government since Independence has pledged to implement policies, programmes and projects that will ensure the equitable distribution of national wealth, as well as fair and equal opportunities in jobs and business opportunities.



Olusegun Obasanjo, former Nigerian leader

However, when it adopted Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which set the target of halving the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015, the Nigerian government began to make more concerted efforts to achieve results.

Several agencies and schemes were established to tackle poverty and unemployment as part of its avowed commitment to reduce poverty and inequality in the country. Agencies such as the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDAN) and the Microcredit and Entrepreneurship Development Schemes (MEDS) were created to address these challenges.

The government also initiated three social protection initiatives, namely: conditional cash transfers targeted at households with specific social characteristics, health fee waivers for pregnant women and children under five, and community-based health insurance plans.

Measures initiated by the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo to tackle inequality in the country included the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), the Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), the Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS), the Social Welfare Scheme (SOWESS) and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). Yet the African Development Bank (AfDB)'s *'African Development Outlook'* report indicated that the rate of poverty in Nigeria worsened between 1996 and 2010. It noted that though poverty rates declined between 1999 and 2004, i.e. during the first five years of the Obasanjo administration, that trend severely reversed after that.

The AfDB report correctly predicted that the effort of the Nigerian government to meet the MDGs target on poverty reduction was "weak" and unrealistic.

The *African Development Outlook* report also showed that inequality among individuals and households in different classes rose from 0.429 in 2004 to 0.447 in 2010, placing Nigeria among those with the highest inequalities in the world. Its startling observations read:

"Though Nigeria has seen significant economic growth as a result of the oil industry, revenue from the market typically gets funnelled to the ruling and business elite. The government has done little to temper that flow of cash, and corruption has been rampant. As a result, the poor get poorer and the rich get richer. Income inequality has been a chronic issue in Nigeria."

This came as a surprising verdict to some, considering that Nigeria not only maintained its place as the wealthiest nation in Africa, recording an average GDP growth rate of 6.7 per cent during the period under review following a prolonged period of high oil prices. But despite the observed upward trend in economic performance during the period, the pitiable living conditions of the majority of people did not change. The high inequality manifested in highly unequal income



Goodluck Jonathan, former Nigeria's President

The Jonathan administration also took further steps to addressing unemployment in the country by creating initiatives to empower youths to become entrepreneurs rather than job seekers. Job creation programmes such as the Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YOU-WIN), Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS), the SURE-P Technical Vocational Education and Training Programme (TVET) and the Youth Employment in Agriculture Programme (YEAP) were set up and actively promoted.

However, just like previous policies of government conceived with much hype and lofty promises, these efforts to address poverty and inequality failed to produce the intended results.

So far, not much success has been recorded in the quest to tackle economic inequalities in income, gender, age, disability, race, class, ethnicity, religion, and opportunity in Nigeria. The consequence has been that the gap between the small group who enjoy the wealth of the country and the majority of the masses who are poor and barely struggling to survive has continued to widen.

Studies have consistently shown that the Nigeria's economy is structured in such a way as to ensure that the rich get richer while the poor get poorer. This has had adverse consequences on the social well being of the populace as a whole.

Victor Emejiwe, a Programme Officer (Good Governance) at the Centre for Social Justice in Abuja, says that the huge gap between the rich and the poor in Nigeria can be traced to unequal in income distribution among workers:

"Income inequality gives birth to corruption, insecurity, lack of efficiency and capacity in the workplace. It retards growth and development of both the individual and the nation. With the exception of a few corporations, income inequality exists amongst large percentage of the workforce in the private and public sectors in Nigeria. The approved minimum wage of N18, 000 is not feasible in the present economy. Workers have relied heavily on kickbacks, and partake in all sort of sharp practices just to meet up with the demands for survival. The low income wage ensnares workers to corruption, hence making a majority of Nigerians guilty of corruption."

Emejiwe noted that President Buhari's fight against corruption is a welcome development, but that corruption must be fought on all fronts by addressing the wage disparity that exists between highly placed public officials and the ordinary workers. He noted that the current situation where less than one percent of Nigerians who are members of the National Assembly consume much of the country's budget as recurrent expenditure would further increase inequality. He said that in order to successfully address inequality, the salaries of all public office holders should be reviewed, with the aim of cutting down some of the unreasonable entitlements.

So far, not much success has been recorded in the quest to tackle economic inequalities in income, gender, age, disability, race, class, ethnicity, religion, and opportunity in Nigeria

distribution and differential access to basic infrastructure, education, training and job opportunities.

To reduce unequal income distribution, the administrations of Presidents Umaru Musa Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan experimented with various initiatives to empower more people through mechanized farming and vocational skills. For instance, in May 2012, President Jonathan inaugurated the Agriculture Transformation Implementation Council (ATIC). Its mandate was to drive his administration's ambitious Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) which was to be a major tool for driving rural income growth, accelerating the achievement of food and nutritional security, generating employment and transforming Nigeria into a leading player in the global food market.

He added that to address income inequality, the focus should be granting workers access to reasonable purchasing power that meets the competing demands of society.

Buhari administration's inequality reduction efforts

President Muhammadu Buhari achieved an historic victory in the 2015 presidential election against President Goodluck Jonathan largely on the strength of his party's 'Change' mantra. Among the key promises made to Nigerians by the victorious All Progressives Congress (APC) during the electoral campaign and in the wake of their triumph, was that action would be taken to reduce poverty and inequality in the land.

In his inaugural address, Buhari was unequivocal in his pledge to address the widening gap between rich and poor in the country, and to ensure that economic opportunities were evenly spread through job creation and boosting domestic productivity.

Prior to his March 28, 2015 victory, Buhari had specifically promised to ensure the equitable distribution of national wealth if elected into office. He reiterated that all Nigerians deserve to "benefit from our collective wealth."

Four months after his inauguration, in his maiden address to the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Buhari told world leaders that the core objectives of the SDGs were at the centre of his administration's agenda. He said that under his



Prof Chukwuma Soludo, former CBN Governor

leadership Nigeria intended "to tackle inequalities arising from massive unemployment and previous government policies favouring a few people to the detriment of the many."

He did not stop there. In his 2016 Budget Speech, President Buhari also expressed confidence that his government's first Appropriation Bill would go a long way towards addressing the core socio-economic challenges that had bedevilled the country for so long, creating a widening gap between the poor and the rich.

In Nigeria's 2017 Budget Proposal tagged "the Budget of Recovery and Growth," Buhari again reiterated the determination of his government to tackle the root causes of the country's socio-economic challenges to lay a solid foundation for the golden era of shared prosperity and equal opportunities.

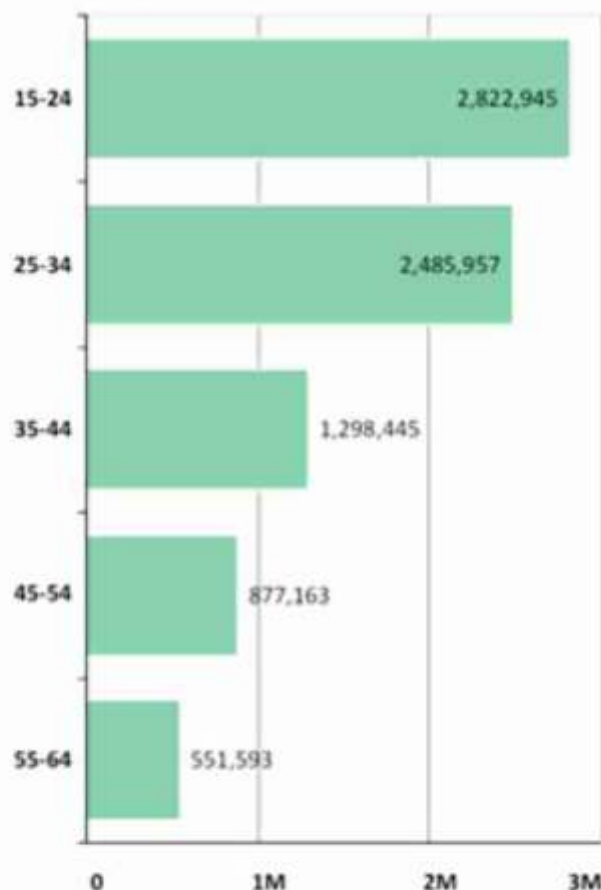
After two years in office, it is appropriate to find out the extent to which the Buhari administration has implemented SDG-10 in terms of reversing the trend of poverty and economic inequality. cursory checks on key economic indicators show that the country's prevailing circumstances have not improved as significantly as some would have anticipated. For instance, Nigeria's unemployment rate climbed to 13.9 percent in the third quarter of 2016 from 9.9 percent and 7.8 percent in 2015 and 2014 respectively. It was the highest level since 2009.

The youth (15-24) unemployment rate increased to 25 percent in the third quarter of 2016 from 21.50 percent in the first quarter of 2016. It had averaged 17.51 percent from 2014 until 2016 when it reached an all time high of 25.00 percent.

Employment rates, however, remained unchanged at 86.40 percent in the third quarter of 2016 from 86.40 percent in the second quarter of 2016. The employment rate in Nigeria averaged 89.79 percent from 2014 until 2016, having reached an all-time high of 93.60 percent in the fourth quarter of 2014 and a record low of 86.40 percent in the second quarter of 2016.

The individual Living Wage in Nigeria remained unchanged at 43,415.20 NGN/Month in the third and fourth quarters of 2016.

Unemployed by Age Groups



Nigeria's GINI Index also confirmed the widening income inequality in the country, being measured at 48.83 in 2010, up from 43 in 2004, according to the World Bank. The rise from 43 to nearly 49 in six years shows the growing gulf in the country's income distribution.

Nigeria's worsening poverty

A former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Professor Chukwuma Soludo, offered a damning verdict on Nigeria's recent economic performance. According to the renowned economist:

"Nigerian workers have suffered a double whammy: average nominal wages are declining while real wages dramatically shrunk (with high inflationary pressures). Asset prices have collapsed, and household wealth has shrunk".

It is rather paradoxical that in a country like Nigeria with abundant human and natural resources, a majority of citizens suffer from poverty. Olufemi Awoyemi, the Chief Executive Officer of Proshare Nigeria observed that statistics appears to have grossly under-estimated the immensity of poverty that defines Nigeria's paradox of 'rich country with poor masses'. He argued that:

"More than 90 percent of Nigerians are poor and exist largely at the mercy of fate. These realities are much more obvious in rural areas and slums. In these places, people die because they cannot afford N500 to purchase needed medication or basic public health care. Worse still, people around may not be able to help as they too may not be able to collectively raise that amount of money. It is a very obvious reality in today's Nigeria!"



Edmund Onwuliri, Deputy Director, Information and Public Relations, National Directorate of Employment

Arinze Nwobu, an assistant director with the Chartered Institute of Stock Brokers also lamented that "it is a paradox", that a Nigerian economy brimming over with both natural and human resources, is still bedevilled by a vicious cycle of poverty. Nwobu went further to make the following stark observations:

"Presently, all macroeconomic indices have turned hostile to the welfare of citizens. In January, 2017, inflation rate spiked to 19 percent, unemployment rate rose for the seventh straight quarter to 13.9 percent in the third quarter of 2016, reported to be the highest level since 2009. Poverty rate stands at 62.6 percent with almost 100 million people living on less than US\$1 a day, reinforcing a vicious cycle of poverty."

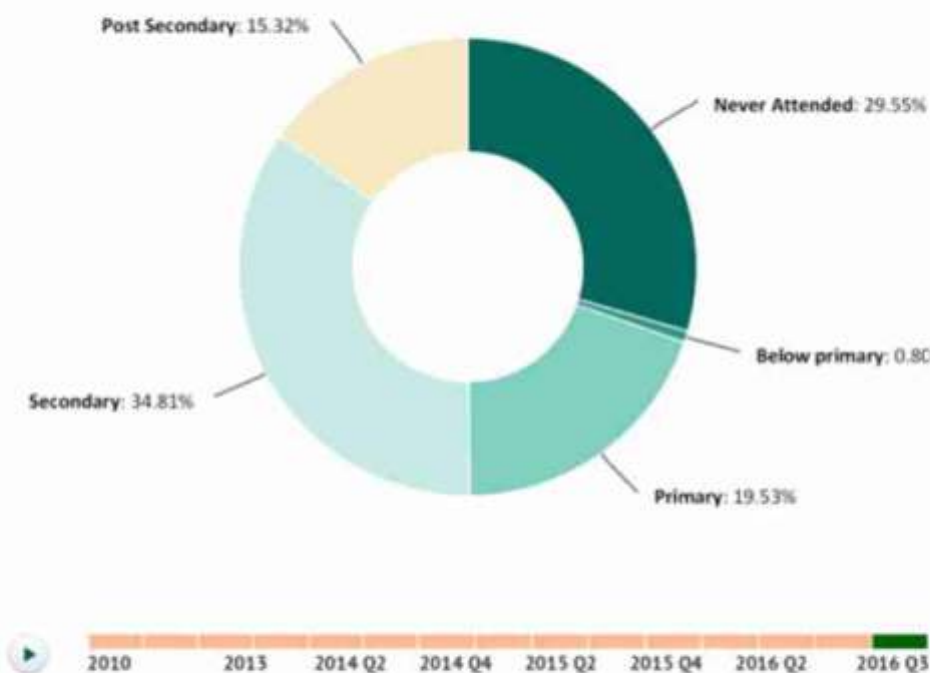
Labour/wage issues

In both the private and public sector, Nigerians who work are supposed to enjoy some fundamental rights and benefits as provided in labour laws such as the Labour Act of 1971, (amended in 1990). Under its provisions, workers are supposed to receive remuneration commensurate with their service.

Apart from the benefits, labour laws make provision for contractual agreements that should guide the relationship between employees and employers, to ensure that no party short-changes the other. The aim of such detailed labour agreements is to ensure that both parties adhere strictly to labour laws and uphold the tenets of the dignity of labour.

However, in the public sector, Nigeria's civil service is still

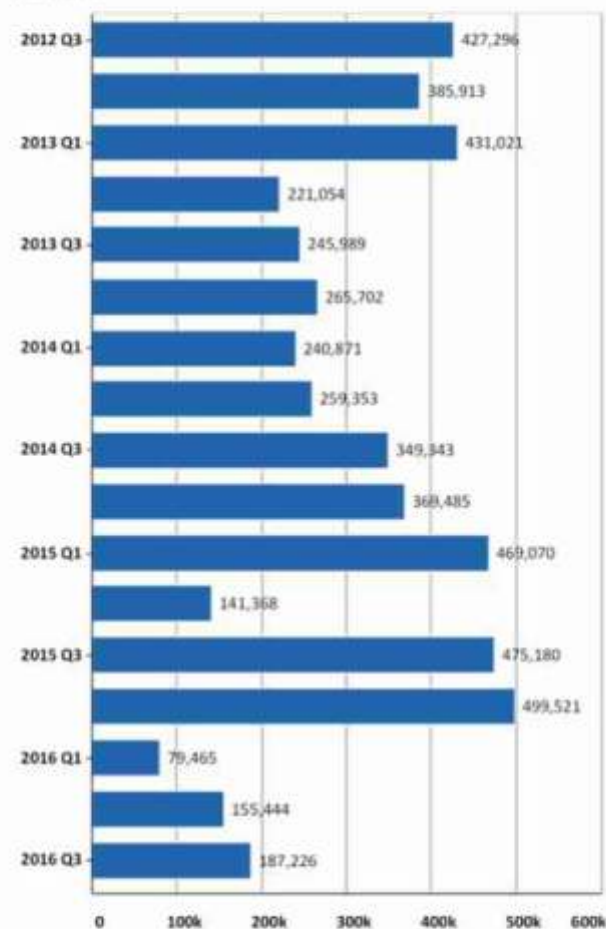
Labor Force by Educational Group



Source: National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria

Jobs Creation in All Sectors

Total Number



Source: National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria

bedevilled by impunity and non-compliance with either local labour laws or global standards.

For instance, while it is unlawful under Nigerian Law for an employer to encourage its employee or for the employee to elect to be paid a "special" holiday allowance so as not to go on the annual leave/holiday; this practice has continued to be flouted despite the fact that medical and human resource experts discourage it.

Sadly, employers of labour, especially in the private sector have continued to take advantage of the unemployment situation in the country by underpaying or over-tasking their employees.

However, with the devastating impact of the economic recession on the incomes and wellbeing of Nigerian workers and their families, the demand for an upward review of the national minimum wage has been intensified. Labour leaders and government negotiators led by the Minister of Labour and Employment are still trying to reach agreement on a new minimum wage.

The challenge remains finding a way to improve workers' wages in line with the prevailing economic realities without exacerbating the country's woes. Already, many state governments have been struggling to pay salaries based on the current minimum wage. There are fears that any major increase may trigger a wave of retrenchment in the public service.

Some experts argue that a unilateral hike in the minimum wage may not be the best way to address income inequality. The last national minimum wage increase of 63.7 percent from N11,000 to N18,000 which became effective from August 2010, was criticized for failing to bridge the income gap because it led to a pay rise which cut across all levels, and succeeded in making the highest paid civil servant on the highest grade level (17, step 9) earn about N453,444.67 per month, or N5,444,336 per year. Meanwhile, the lowest grade workers who would now be earning N18,000 per month or only N216,000 per year. The increase thus failed to bridge the wide gap in pay

Nigeria's GINI Index



Source: trendingeconomics.com

differentials among staff of various sectors of the civil service. Moreover, the minimum wage was not made binding on private sector employers.

As labour leaders in Nigeria mount pressure for another increase in the minimum wage, the challenge remains how to use the pay structure to address the widening gap between the rich and the poor, and address income inequality. There is no sign yet that the proposals for a new minimum wage will close any of the loopholes of previous ones, or address the critical issue of income inequality.

Economic empowerment

The Buhari administration has also tried to create employment opportunities in its bid to bridge the inequality gap. Thus it budgeted the sum of N542,889,800 for the rehabilitation of five model skills centres in five states, rehabilitation of 63 skills centres in 21 states; and retooling of 68 skills centre in 21 one states in the 2016 budget.

It also rolled out the first of its N500 billion social investment programmes in June 2016. The Teacher Corps, nicknamed "N-Power Teach", is one of the three direct job creation and training schemes launched by the government in June 2016. It is a paid volunteer programme of two-year duration that will enable government train 500,000 selected unemployed Nigerians to serve in teaching, instructional, and advisory roles in primary and secondary schools, agricultural extension systems and in public health and community education (including civic and adult education).

Other social investment programmes launched by the presidency to address unemployment and entrepreneurial challenges in the country include the Conditional Cash

Transfer that pays N5000 monthly to one million Nigerians, the Micro-Credit Scheme for over 1.5 million Nigerians, the Home-Grown School Feeding programme that will serve 5.5 million Nigerian pupils in primary schools free meals, and the Education Support Grant Programme for 100,000 tertiary students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

Apart from these social investment programmes, the Nigerian government recently began the registration of unemployed citizens through an online portal: www.jobsforall.ng. Edmund Onwuliri, the Deputy Director for Information and Public Relations at the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), explained that this would enable the agency to serve as a clearing house to job seekers with vacancies in government agencies and the private sector.

Despite these initiatives by the Buhari administration to tackle unemployment and boost shared prosperity, concerns remain that Nigeria may still not meet the SDG-10 targets.

Adetokunbo Mumuni, the Executive Director of the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) believes that efforts of both the past and present governments in Nigeria have not been able to address the root causes of widening inequality and poverty in the country because of poor planning and implementation.

Mumuni said that to significantly reduce inequality in Nigeria, government must be sincere about creating an enabling and sustainable environment for the fair and equitable distribution of national wealth and economic opportunities to make it possible for Nigerians to live and operate in a more equal society. ■

13 CLIMATE ACTION



Climate Action: Nigeria's Progress Report

ON December 12, 2015 during a United Nations-sponsored meeting in Paris, COP21, Nigeria joined 194 other countries to make a historic pledge to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. What was later dubbed the 'Paris Agreement' provides a comprehensive framework for stabilizing planet Earth's climate and preventing the atmosphere from heating above a global warming tipping-point of two degrees Celsius. In other words, it offered global policy leaders, experts and other stakeholders a how-to-do-it document to save the planet from ecological doom.

Four months later, in April 2016, most of these countries put a seal to their pledges by signing the Paris Agreement at the UN Headquarters in New York. Nigeria did not sign the document until the 22nd of September 2016, and on the 28th of March 2017, President Muhammadu Buhari signed the Instrument of Ratification



President Buhari signing the Instrument of Ratification of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change at State House Abuja on March 28, 2017

of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change at State House Abuja.

However, Nigeria is conspicuously missing from the list of countries that had fully paid their 2017 contributions by the 1st of January 2017, as required by the agreed financial policy that supports the crucial work of the UN climate body. The delay in ratification of the Paris Agreement and payment of her 2017 financial obligations for the UN climate body efforts puts a huge question mark over Nigeria's full commitment to the global climate action deal.

Ranked amongst the top 25 Green-House Gas (GHG) Emitting Countries and considered vulnerable to the impact of climate change, Nigeria ought to be a front-runner in the race to save the planet from climate change calamity. Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are projected to grow 114 percent by 2030 to around 900 million tonnes - approximately 3.4 tonnes for every Nigerian. As a top polluter, Nigeria is expected to implement measures to reach the target of 20 percent unconditional greenhouse gas emission reductions by 2020, scale another target of 30 percent unconditional reduction by 2030 and to also put in place policies that reach the goal of 100 percent renewable energy by 2050.

Thus, despite its late start, and beyond the submission of pledges known as Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), Nigeria's federal government has committed itself to mobilize funds and to channel efforts by governmental and non-governmental actors towards meeting its Climate Action targets.

Targets of the Climate Action deal

The Climate Action agreement requires Nigeria and her development partners to collaborate with relevant stakeholders and individuals to urgently undertake planned actions, projects and programmes as captured in its INDCs to combat climate change and its impact across the country.

To achieve the targets set by the Climate Action's SDG-13, Nigeria, like other signatories to the Paris Agreement, is expected to:

- Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries
- Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning
- Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning
- Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilizing jointly \$100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalize the Green Climate Fund through its capitalization as soon as possible
- Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small-island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities.



Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations

How has Nigeria fared so far in this historic race to save the planet? To what extent has the Nigerian government been able to mobilize personnel and material resources to achieve these targets? Will Nigeria be able to meet the targets set under the Climate Action's SDG-13 by 2030?

This report takes a look at the progress recorded so far, and considers the prospects and the problems facing full compliance.

Climate change policy framework

Nigeria is yet to enact a specific climate change law that can provide a legal framework and enabling environment for the implementation of its climate action agenda. Despite repeated calls from stakeholders for the establishment of a National Climate Change Commission that will coordinate climate issues in Nigeria, a Bill to establish the Commission is yet to be presented to the National Assembly.

Although, the Federal Executive Council adopted a comprehensive strategy policy on climate change, the 'Nigeria Climate Change Policy Response and Strategy' in 2012, together with several environmental and sectoral policies, strategies, and plans where climate change adaptation could apply, experts say their application is limited by the lack of the required legislation.

According to Climate Scorecard, a non-profit organization that operates an interactive site where concerned parties can participate in post-Paris Agreement efforts to reduce emissions in the 25 top greenhouse gas (GHG) emitting countries, the lack of an enabling climate change law in Nigeria could hamper the country's climate change adaptation targets.

However, stakeholders are optimistic that the country's National Policy on Environment framework will guide its efforts to deal with the ever-growing environmental challenges if well implemented. Through the policy, Nigeria could foster sustainable development by means of national initiatives that strengthen the country's strategies on climate change preparedness, adaptation and mitigation across all sectors of society, including vulnerable groups.

The Federal Government took a crucial step when it established the Department of Climate Change, under the

Federal Ministry of Environment to handle Nigeria's climate change issues. It also set up the National Climate Change Trust Fund (NCCTF) and the Environmental Sustainability Group (ESG) to design and attract financing mechanisms for adaptation initiatives.

Nonetheless, the challenge remains how the government can effectively address the country's increasing environmental and climate change challenges. The findings of this study show that Nigeria is still bedevilled by numerous issues that must be tackled before the country can make the desired progress towards meeting its Climate Action 2030 targets. The following major challenges remain:

Climate change adaptation

The 2016 Climate Change Vulnerability Index (CCVI) classifies Nigeria as one of the ten most vulnerable countries in the world. The report published by the UK-based risk assessment company, Maplecroft, describes Nigeria as a country with "high risk in the southern part and extreme risk in the North". It warns that climate change could result in a loss of between 6 percent and 30 percent of GDP by 2050, worth an estimated US\$100-460 billion. If no adaptation is implemented, Nigeria could lose an estimated 2-11 percent of its GDP by 2020, thereby hampering the national development goal of becoming one of the top 20 economies in the world.

Although, the impact of climate change in Nigeria varies in extent, severity and intensity, with the North-eastern part of the country being the most vulnerable and the South-east the least, the country remains in the eye of the climate change storm. Recent studies confirm that climate change poses a significant threat to Nigeria's ambitious development goals, with the effects increasingly being felt in the economic sectors and areas of agriculture and food security, water, floods and drought, soil erosion, sea level rise, energy, tourism, and ecosystems.

Overcoming the development challenge of climate change requires that the Federal, States and Local Governments, as well as the private sector, take part in extensive adaptation and mitigation measures to reduce vulnerability to future climate change. Official policy statements indicate that the Federal Government will develop and implement a National Strategic Road Map for Responding to Climate Change in Nigeria and/or a National Climate Change Response Programme; domesticate the globally-agreed climate change regime of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), including but not limited to the implementation of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the Paris Agreement, and will participate effectively and on a continuous basis in global climate change negotiations.

The Federal Government has also expressed its readiness to implement the National Climate Change Policy and Response Strategy (NCCPRS) and the National Adaptation Strategy and Plan of Action for Climate Change Nigeria (NASPA-CCN 2011), and to develop and implement an Integrated Financial Strategy for Climate Change Response (IFSCCR). The NASPA-CCN 2011 document identifies a set of 13 sector-specific strategies, policies, programmes and measures for the country's climate change adaptation priorities.

Nigeria has also pledged to mainstream climate change into all sectors of the national economy, promote evidence-based research in climate change and raise awareness on climate change mitigation and adaptation opportunities among stakeholders at all levels, and to strengthen its national climate change institutional structure and governance to include active participation by the States and the Local Governments.

Mitigation strategy

Nigeria's INDC includes an unconditional contribution to reduce GHG emissions by 20 percent below business as usual projections by 2030, and a conditional contribution of 45 percent, based on commitment of international support. To achieve this target, Nigeria must implement policies and projects that will reduce GHG emissions in five sectors.

In the energy sector, for instance, Nigeria must invest more in renewable energy, especially decentralized or off-grid power solutions, multi-cycle power stations, scalable power stations of 20-50 megawatts (MW) and enforcement of energy efficiency of 2 percent per year and 30 percent by 2030. Nigeria's National Renewable

Energy Action Plan sets out how renewable energy is expected to develop and expand in order to achieve the national target of 23 percent and 31 percent renewable energy in 2020 and 2030 respectively.

It should also be noted that so far, Nigeria has performed poorly in global renewable energy transfers.

The Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) is working towards establishing a system of feed-in tariffs in electricity, as well as other incentives to ensure that the country's ambitions for renewable energy are supported and have the required investment. Nigeria is also exploring the Green Funds option supported by Green Bonds to help fund the expansion of renewable energy in the country.

Deforestation, the second largest contributor to global warming also must be tackled. Although Nigeria may not have the financial resources or sophisticated technology to mitigate climate change, the country is endowed with a mosaic of natural ecosystems that have the capacity for carbon sequestration. Experts advocate the aggressive implementation of policies, programmes and projects



Benoît Bosquet, World Bank's Practice Manager for Environment and Natural Resources

that will scale down emissions from deforestation and environmental degradation in the country.

Fortunately the Federal Government has made provision for forest regeneration in the 2017 Budget. Notable in this regard is the planned establishment of 10 hectares of Acacia-Senegal in Zamfara State to increase forest cover and mitigate the effects of drought and climate change in the state.

The Federal government also wants Nigeria to switch to natural gas rather than fossil fuels, enact and enforce laws or regulations that will end gas flaring in the country. Government equally intends to pursue aggressive climate-smart agriculture and reforestation. In addition, there are plans to phase out the use of charcoal as domestic cooking, while the country will adopt green technology in industry and energy-friendly infrastructure and transport systems.

Climate change advocacy

A recent climate change awareness survey conducted by British World Service Trust shows that most Nigerians are not aware of climate change, despite its impact on their day-to-day activities, and that little or no attention has been paid to alarming changes in weather patterns such as excessive flooding, increased aridity and intense desert encroachment witnessed in northern Nigeria, the drying of Lake Chad and dwindling flow of the Niger Basin and other major waterways with the attendant poor agricultural yield, communal clashes over natural resource management and siltation of river basins.

It has also been observed that national efforts to address environmental issues have not been broad-based or wide-reaching enough. Access to timely and accurate information on the environment is still restricted, while little progress has been made towards inclusive implementation of the country's INDC at all levels.

The importance of environmental education and public awareness in creating a broad-based environmental management involving many and varied stakeholders cannot be over-emphasized. There is already some collaboration among relevant government institutions and agencies, state governments, the private sector, civil society and the general public towards implementation of the Federal Government's climate action initiatives, but there is plenty of scope for improvement. The government has embarked on States-wide Climate Change Knowledge Immersion workshops as part of the efforts to sensitize and mobilize stakeholders to this end.

Nigeria's former Environment Minister Amina Mohammed explained that the workshops which focused on "Accelerating Climate-Resilient and Low-Carbon Development," were a call to action which would go a long way towards ensuring knowledge delivery and experience sharing. They would enable knowledge dissemination and set out the role to be played by various stakeholders in implementing sectoral and multi-sectoral climate actions to accelerate climate-resilient and low-carbon development across the country.

Mohammed said that the Nigerian government was committed to empowering the Nigerian people to participate in taking climate action and protecting the



Ibrahim Jubril, Minister of State for Environment

environment:

"This commitment is also reflected in the sector-wide implementation of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) using a participatory approach to accelerate resilience and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)."

Such enlightenment campaigns are expected to facilitate the implementation of climate change adaptation strategies and mobilize stakeholders and citizens to work to mitigate the impact of climate change.

Nigeria's climate change funding

According to recent estimates by the World Bank Group, Nigeria requires about \$140 billion to achieve its climate action goals and meet its NDC targets by 2030. That means the country needs to spend about \$10 billion or about N3 trillion annually for the next 14 years to achieve low carbon-growth and stand a better chance of meeting its targets. The funds are needed for massive investments in clean energy, environmentally friendly infrastructure, agriculture and large scale remediation, and to create green jobs for the country's young population.

With the implementation of Nigeria's INDC formally commencing this year, the Federal Government is working to mobilize the necessary resources for climate friendly projects. The sum of N8 billion has already been earmarked for implementation of the country's NDCs on climate change in the 2017 Appropriation Bill. According to the Director of the Department of Climate Change, Dr. Peter Tarfa, that sum will be dedicated to climate change efforts and projects that cut across the government's Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) as part of efforts to achieve the set goals of reducing carbon emissions by 25 percent by the year 2030.

However, experts insist government funding alone cannot meet the kind of investment the country needs to meet its climate action targets. The World Bank's Practice Manager for Environment and Natural Resources, Benoit Bosquet, advises that Nigeria's best chance of raising the capital needed to meet the country's climate change commitments and control its impact on the country is to

quickly mobilize private sector funding and participation.

In February 2017, the Federal Government started its plan to raise money from the private sector for its climate change action programme by becoming the third country after France and Poland to float Green Bonds. Nigeria's Green Bonds offering, the first of its kind in Africa, is a partnership initiative between the Federal Ministry of Environment and the Nigerian Stock Exchange. It aims to mobilize about \$2 billion (N700 billion) in private capital investments for green technology, sustainable agriculture and the environment in the country.

Minister of State for the Environment, Ibrahim Jubril, explained that Green Bonds are designed to help Nigeria overcome the challenge of accessing international funding for climate-friendly projects for the priority

Nigeria's efforts to address climate change still suffer from low participation by the private sector, which – as a major player in market forces – must be fully involved in environmental management

sectors of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) sector road-maps, which are targeted at reducing average global carbon emissions to two degrees Celsius: "Once we have people who are willing to invest in programmes or projects that will assist in mitigation of climate change, the Bonds will go a long way to assist us."

Justine Leigh Bell, Climate Bonds' Global Director of Market Development said that Green Bonds are crucial in helping a country like Nigeria meet its climate change targets.

Nigeria will also be looking to tap into the \$8.3 billion Climate Investment Fund (CIF) to develop clean technology, sustainable management of forests, renewable energy access and climate resilient development.

Several other funding schemes such as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), have been adapted globally to support climate change mitigation and adaptation. However, Nigeria is barely able to benefit from these global resources due to a number of factors such as stringent CDM funding guidelines and inadequate private sector engagement in climate change programmes.

Factors militating against Nigeria's mitigation efforts

Poor management of natural resources: Nigeria is yet to find ways to tackle environment-unfriendly practices such as large-scale deforestation and land clearing, inappropriate and illegal mining, excessive irrigation, water supply, inappropriate use of agrochemicals and inorganic fertilizers, uncontrolled and poor livestock farming practices and gas flaring. Chief Phillip Asiodu, President of the Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) noted that Nigeria has lost about 30 percent of its forest cover from 1960 to date, due to deforestation and habitat degrading activities such as forest clearance for

He said that at independence, Nigeria had about 35 percent forest cover, but today, the figure is less than five percent. He added that Nigeria must devote more energy on advocacy while supporting massive tree planting initiatives throughout the country.

Lack of environmentally friendly technology: Recent studies show that one of the major challenges facing Nigeria as a developing country remains its poor attitude towards adoption and use of environmentally sound technologies (ESTs) in its development policies, programmes and projects. The country's natural resources exploitation, energy consumption, production processes, infrastructural development and transport systems still rely heavily on technologies that contribute to environmental pollution, create solid and electronic waste and habitat degradation.

Land degradation and desertification: Severe land degradation continues to ravage the country, resulting in a drastic reduction in the productivity of land resources. Reducing the rate and severity of desertification and reversing land degradation remain a key challenge for environmental sustainability and sustainable development in Nigeria.

Pollution: Pollution continues to be a major environmental challenge in the country, with a significant impact on the well-being of the country's environment and the health of its people.

Urban decay: Nigeria ranks among the most urbanized countries in the world with the rate about 56 percent in 2015. The pace of urbanization increase has been such that maintenance of modest environmental standards has inevitably lagged behind.

Coastal management: Nigeria's coastal region suffers degradation from diverse human activities, particularly oil exploration and exploitation, agricultural and industrial development. Efforts to address critical environmental problems in the country's coastal areas and marine environment have mainly been lethargic.

Weak environmental governance: Weak and fragmented environmental governance remains a major bane of environmental sustainability in the country. Many of the institutions dealing with environmental issues have weak capacity. They are too under-funded and ineffective in their core functions to have a meaningful effect on environmental sustainability.

Private sector participation: Nigeria's efforts to address climate change still suffer from low participation by the private sector, which as a major player in market forces – must be fully involved in environmental management. Improving the level of private sector participation in environmental management to the point at which they take economic responsibility for damage done to the environment is critical.

Time wasting: Experts have been clear that Nigeria, just like other countries, does not have the luxury of time in the bid to save the planet from catastrophe. It is predicted that climate change will worsen Nigeria's vulnerability if not addressed in time.

Progress report: Nigeria is struggling to produce its first Biennial Update Report (BUR) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The BUR is being prepared, taking into account the GHG

emission level of different sectors of the economy, such as energy, oil and gas, transportation and agriculture. It is undertaken in order to improve transparency during the process of tracking mitigation progress of national GHG emissions instead of countries who are parties to the Convention (UNFCCC), thereby reinforcing ambition at a global level and providing the information basis for planning and implementing mitigation action.

Supporting institutions

Nigeria's Climate Action effort has attracted the support of international and national development

finance institutions, non-governmental organizations and corporate bodies. Key institutions such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank are already supporting some projects designed to address the impact of climate change across Nigeria.

The Global Change Strategies International Inc (GCSI) of Canada is involved in efforts to tackle climate change in Nigeria, and is partnering with the Nigerian Environmental Study Action Team (NEST) on a wide range of climate change capacity development projects. Nigeria has also received financial support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for the development of its BUR on Climate Change efforts. ■



Addressing the Challenges of Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

AMONG the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for transforming the world, SDG-16, which focuses on "peace, justice and strong institutions" ranks high, and for obvious reasons. Without peace, justice and strong institutions, society itself may be likened to the Hobbesian State where life is nasty, brutish and harsh; a free-for-all society where anything goes, where justice is for sale, where law enforcement agencies are above the law and easily compromised, and where there is no equality before the law. The implications of this are that impunity would increase while corruption would become entrenched.

According to the UN, the judiciary and the police are among the institutions "most affected by corruption".

In Nigeria, public perception and statistics support the UN's view of the police and judiciary.

The challenge of policing

An April 2015 report by NOIIPolls rates the Nigeria Police Force as the most corrupt agency in Nigeria. It found that among other factors, Nigerians blame "weak public institutions (24 percent), poor pay incentive (6 percent), ineffective anti-corruption agencies (5 percent), absence of key Anti-Corruption tools (2 percent) as responsible for the prevalence of corruption" in Nigeria. The report also cited "findings from a survey conducted by the CLEEN Foundation in collaboration with the McArthur Foundation [which] revealed the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), alongside the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) as the most corrupt of federal government agencies in the country in 2013." The NOIIPolls report, which sought to find out the experience of Nigerians on corruption, found that:

"...regardless of gender, age and geo-political zones, majority of Nigerians (63 percent) claimed they have experienced cases of corruption, either in the form of bribery, illegal business practices, irregular payments



Abubakar Malami, Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice

etc."

One of the questions asked was: "In what sector did you experience challenges related to corruption such as illegal business practices, irregular payments, bribery etc.?" To this, a total of 61 percent of Nigerians reported that they had faced challenges relating to corruption in the public sector and of this percentage, 22 percent indicated that these challenges were experienced with the Nigerian Police Force, while 25 percent indicated



Martin Kure Abeshi, Comptroller General, Nigerian Immigration Service

Ministries Departments and Agencies and other areas."

Part of the reason why the Nigerian Police is deemed corrupt is the remuneration of the average policeman and dismal work incentive. The salary of low to middle rank policemen has been poor compared to that of their counterparts in other security agencies. In a Premium Times report titled: Inside Nigeria Police Shocking Work Conditions where Officers are Left Homeless, Paid Peanuts, Ibanga Isine reported that "the Nigeria police, especially the rank and file, are the least paid among corresponding security agencies in Nigeria, a failing that fuels corruption." The writer went on to state that:

"Tens of thousands of officers of the Nigerian police receive some of the poorest pay even in the West African sub-region, and the worst hit are the rank and file - the force's foot soldiers who spend decades in the line of duty but are hardly promoted, accommodated or paid well."

Incidentally, the poorly remunerated rank and file in the Nigeria Police Force are the ones who typically man checkpoints on Nigerian roads, conduct patrols and have direct encounters with the general public. They and other policemen claim that they resort to bribery not only as a way of making up for their poor income, but for meeting other exigencies such as fuelling their patrol vehicles since some policemen on patrol duty complain that they are expected or directed by their superiors to fuel their patrol vehicles themselves, and it is left to them to get the money to do so however they can. Policemen posted to 'lucrative duty' posts are said to be required to make regular returns to their superiors as a condition for continuing to enjoy such postings.

Generally, poor salary and abysmal work conditions, which include poor accommodation, (many police barracks are an eyesore), inability to access transfer duty allowances or other incentives, hamper the productivity of police officers and makes them vent their frustration on ordinary Nigerians.

Apart from these challenges, top police officers are of

needs to employ more police to effectively checkmate crime in a country of approximately 170 million.

In February 2017, the Inspector General of Police, Ibrahim Idris, was quoted as saying that henceforth, no fewer than 10,000 personnel will be recruited annually to enhance its operations. In March 2016, a Daily Trust report put the total number of police personnel in the country at 370,000 which approximates to one policeman to 459 Nigerians.

Idris added that the police would continue to accord top priority to training, retraining, promotion, welfare, housing, logistics and other operational needs of its personnel to boost their productivity. As good as Idris's intentions may be, getting started and ensuring that the recruits are properly vetted and trained will be crucial.

Reforming the judiciary

The perception of many Nigerians - despite the common belief that "the judiciary is the last hope of the common man" - is that just like the police, the judiciary is corrupt. The belief is widespread that litigants or those who appear before the courts can obtain judgment in their favour if they grease the palms of judicial officers. Though this negative view of the judiciary is shared by many, few Nigerians would be able to substantiate it if put to task, yet it continues to be propagated. Chekwas Okorie, national chairman of the United Progressives Party (UPP) opined that the greatest tragedy of modern Nigeria is the rot that has occurred in the judiciary. According to him, Lawyers engage in negotiating bribes with judges. They also compromise cases brought to them by innocent clients if induced by their opponents in litigation.

Nigerian legal practitioners stand accused along with the judiciary, it being alleged that they deliberately stand in the way of justice by coming up with all manner of stratagems to postpone cases involving their clients, particularly those who are wealthy, to secure their freedom. Such allegations imply that judicial officers are either motivated more by pecuniary gain, or that they have sympathy for or are as corrupt as the people facing trial.

On October 7, 2016, a melodrama of sorts played out in Abuja, Port Harcourt, Kaduna and Gombe when the homes of some superior court judges, including justices of the Supreme Court and High Court, were invaded by the Department of State Security Services (DSS), ostensibly to collect evidence linking them to corruption. At the end of the exercise, a large amount of cash in local and foreign currencies totalling over N360 million were said to have been recovered from the homes of three judges: Justices Adeniyi F.A. Ademola, Nwali Sylvester Ngwuta and John Inyang Okoro.

Many lawyers have called for a reform of the sector if the image of the judiciary is to be restored. Edmund Biriomoni, a legal practitioner based in Osogbo, Osun State, expressed the wish for an all-encompassing reform, not just in the police and judiciary, but in other agencies involved in the administration of justice such as the EFCC, the ICPC, and the Nigerian Prisons Service.

State of the prisons

Another arm of the criminal justice system is the prisons. Part of its functions set out in the Prisons Act is to

"take into lawful custody all those certified to be kept by courts of competent jurisdiction." Prisons are expected to serve as reformatories that allow for introspection and make the inmates better individuals upon release, but with the awful condition of many Nigerian prisons, this hardly occurs. A March 2016 report by Z.O. Opafunso of the School of Management Technology, Federal University of Technology at Akure, states that: "Nigerian prisons are characterized by overcrowding, widespread disease, poor ventilation, poor feeding and poor medical attention."

A November 2016 report by the British Home Office on prison conditions in Nigeria found that:

"Prison conditions, including unofficial detention centres operated by the security forces, are generally extremely poor. Many prisons have severe overcrowding, shortages of food and water, inadequate sanitary conditions and an absence of, or inadequate, medical treatment. There is also reportedly a high incidence of deaths in detention, as well as reports of torture, extra-judicial executions and extortion by guards. Around 70 per cent of prisoners are awaiting trial, some of whom have spent long periods in detention"

The Home Office report refers to research undertaken by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) at 173 prisons in 2012 as evidence of the poor state of Nigerian prisons.

The 199 page NHRC report focused on the following matters: the facilities at the prisons, access to justice, welfare of detainees, welfare of officers and general information. It reveals shocking statistics about Nigerian prisons.

In terms of capacity, the research revealed that most of the prisons were overcrowded.

"Congestion was as a result of the number of detainees that were awaiting trial. Comparatively, in all the 173 prisons audited across the Country, the lockup was 50,645 compared to a capacity of 46,024. For instance, in Bauchi prison, the lockup was 820 as against a capacity of 500; Onitsha prison has a capacity of 326 but the lock up was 755, Enugu Prison had 1,625 lockups as against 638 capacity and Owerri prison had 1,745 lockups, compared to a capacity of 548. Ikoyi prison in Lagos State with a capacity of 1,700 had 2,439 lockups, while Abeokuta New and Akure prisons with a capacity of 510 and 160 had 733 and 707 lockups respectively at the time of the audit exercise. So also Port Harcourt with a capacity of 804 but had a lockup of 2,902, while MSP Oko in Edo State with a capacity of 608 had a lockup of 1,089. Similarly, the MSP Keffi, Nasarawa State, has a capacity of 160 but the lockup was 571."

The analysis by the zones revealed the following results:

The report also showed the number of detainees with legal or no legal representation:

"In the 168 prisons audited throughout the country, it was discovered that most of the prisons had no record of detainees with legal representation. In the North-east zone, only 797 out of a total of 6677 detainees had legal representation, while in the South-south zone,

North-west Zone, the ratio of detainees with legal representation was 3:2 and 4719 out of 11078 had legal representation in the South-west zone. Similarly, 1,716 detainees had legal representation in the North-

NIGERIAN PRISONS IN TERMS OF ACCESS TO JUSTICE

S/N	Zone	Number of detainees with Legal representation	Number of detainees without Legal representation
1	South South	5,570	671
2	North East	797	2,453
3	North Central	1,716	556
4	South West	4,719	556
5	North West	4,719	---
6	South East	1,716	228
TOTAL		19,237	4,464

Source: National Human Rights Commission report 2012

NIGERIAN PRISONS IN TERMS OF CAPACITY

S/N	Zone	Capacity	Lockup
1	South South	7,298	10,232
2	North East	9,011	6,677
3	North Central	7,722	6,816
4	South West	7,722	11,078
5	North West	9,754	8,087
6	South East	4,467	7,664
TOTAL		46,024	50,645

Source: National Human Rights Commission report 2012

central and 1,716 in the South-east zone. In some prisons, there were no records on the number of detainees with legal representation."

In the North-east zone, about 2,453 detainees, with Bauchi recording the highest with 400 detainees had no legal representation. Others are Gombe and Mubi prisons with 286 and 242 respectively, Yola prison had 228 and 130 detainees in Ganye prison were without legal representation. Also, 556 detainees in the North-central had no legal representation, while 556 detainees in the South-west had no legal representation and 671 in the South-South zone. This is despite the fact that legal representation for any one accused of having committed an offence is an important safeguard against the violation of the accused right to fair hearing."

With reports like this, Sylvester Odion-Akhaine, a lecturer in the Department of Political Science, Lagos State University, may be right in his assessment that "the prison system in Nigeria is dehumanizing."



Ibrahim Magu, Chairman, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)

The Nigerian Army and its challenges

Like the Police, the army is not free of challenges. Funding for the Nigerian Armed Forces, of which the army is a part, like the police, has been poor for decades and this was reflected in the weapons available for soldiers to quell the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East. One of the reasons the Nigerian military was unable to defeat Boko Haram in the early years of the insurgency was the largely out-dated equipment used by the soldiers. As recent investigations from the probe of arms in Nigeria have shown, some of the monies voted for arms procurement were diverted by officials of government. However, poor or inadequate weapons are not the only challenges confronting the Nigerian military. Since the fight against the Boko Haram insurgency began in Nigeria in 2009, it been accused of arbitrariness and extra-judicial killing by some observers. A June 2015 report by Amnesty International titled "Nigeria: Stars On Their Shoulders: Blood on Their Hands: War Crimes Committed by the Nigerian Military" alleges that "in the course of security operations against Boko Haram in north-east Nigeria, Nigerian military forces have extra judicially executed more than 1,200 people; they have arbitrarily arrested at least 20,000 people, mostly young men and boys; and have committed countless acts of torture."

Long before this report, the United States of America had refused to sell arms to the Nigerian government due to the poor human rights record of the Nigerian military. Although Nigerian military authorities denied or described such reports as exaggerated, the allegation of excessive use of force by the military is one some of their countrymen may not consider unfounded as the civilian-military relationship has not been cordial since the days of military rule in Nigeria.

Catalogue of religious violence

Nigeria, a vast nation of more than 250 ethnic groups, is not new to ethnic and religious crises. Such crises, which date back to the 1940s - long before the country's independence from Britain in 1960 - had resulted in uncountable deaths of Nigerians and destruction of property and poses a stumbling block to peace and stability in the country.

According to Biriomoni, ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria is mostly due to "the struggle between rival ethnic



Olatokunbo Ige, Director, United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC)

groups or organisations seeking to maintain or gain control of state power [and to people who use] state institutions to distribute economic and political benefits preferentially to their ethnic brethren."

Such ethnic or political affiliations explain why, for all the violence that resulted in the death of thousands of Nigerians and destruction of properties, few culprits are known to have been brought to book. It is believed that, apart from weak institutions, many suspects across the country escape prosecution for crimes committed due to their religious or ethnic background. In February 2017, former President Goodluck Jonathan said that religious violence continues to thrive in Nigeria partly because those convicted for their part in past atrocities were never prosecuted. In an address to the United States House Sub-Committee on Africa, Jonathan cited the killings in Southern Kaduna, a perennial flashpoint, and said:

"If, as a nation, we do not kill religious persecution and extremism, then religious persecution and extremism will kill Nigeria. The potential danger associated with the level of conflict going on across the country is so glaring that no sane mind can ignore."

The former president noted that a major challenge before Nigeria was how to ensure that: "Christians and Muslims co-exist peacefully in Nigeria and practice their religions freely without discrimination, molestation and killings." He pointed out that though there had been more than 10 incidents of religious violence in Kaduna State alone (including Southern Kaduna) since 1992, on only one occasion - the Zango Kataf disturbance when 14 persons were sentenced to death by a tribunal set up by the Ibrahim Babangida administration - were the culprits punished. Jonathan further explained that the prosecution of the mastermind of the Madalla bomb blast, Kabiru Umar, aka Kabiru Sokoto, a Boko Haram suspect, and a number of his colleagues, by his administration, was part of his effort to ensure that the perpetrators of religious violence paid for their crime.

Jonathan's view is something of a broadside at the Muhammadu Buhari administration, which is seen by some observers as lacking the courage to prosecute Fulani herdsmen accused of killing Nigerians.

On the restiveness in the oil-rich Niger Delta, Jonathan said the issue predated Nigeria's independence, as even

before the discovery of oil in the area, some citizens of the area had challenged the British colonial administration on the exploitation of palm produce from the region. As a way to halt unrest and religious violence in Nigeria, Jonathan advised that the recommendations of the 2014 Constitutional Conference organised by his administration should be adopted.

The import of Jonathan's message to the United States House Sub-Committee on Africa on recompense is that because people are not prosecuted for crimes committed, others are emboldened to copy them. It is not unlikely that part of the reason for the failure to punish crime is due to ethnic or religious considerations.

Negative impact of porous borders

Another known reason for Nigeria's insecurity is the country's weak border security. In the northern part of the country, Nigeria shares borders with Niger Republic, Chad and Cameroon. Many of these are unmanned or poorly manned, and allows streams of foreigners to make their way into the country and smuggle arms in tow. It is therefore not surprising that Nigeria is one of the countries with a high percentage of illegal arms. According to a statement by Martin Kure Abeshi, the Comptroller-General of the Nigerian Immigration Service in April 2016, there are more than 1,400 illegal routes into Nigeria. Abeshi added that the challenges confronting the agency include poor funding and shortage of personnel, as the number of immigration officers were inadequate to effectively carry out its mandate.

The problem of porous border is not restricted to the northern part of the country as even the borders with Benin Republic and Cameroon, the seaports, not to mention the have proven not to be watertight. The smuggling of illegal arms and stolen goods across these borders are common.

In August 2016, Vanguard newspaper quoted Olatokunbo Ige, Director of United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, (UNREC) as stating during the National Consultation on Physical Security and Stockpile Management (PSSM) in Abuja, organised by the Agency and Presidential Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons, PRESCOM, that Small Arms and Light Weapons, SALW abound in Nigeria and had made their way into hands that posed a danger to peace in the country.

While reliable data on the numbers of these weapons circulating freely in the country is unavailable, analysts have in recent times estimated that of the about 500 million weapons that may be circulating in West Africa in 2010, some 70 percent of these could be found in Nigeria.

Strong institutions as an antidote to crime

Before his emergence as president of Nigeria, the impression many people had of Muhammadu Buhari was that of an anti-corruption czar. To potential voters therefore, having Buhari as president would lead to the eradication of corruption in Nigeria. Since winning the presidential election in 2015, Buhari has made it clear that fighting corruption is one of his administration's priorities. Arrests have been made while huge sums of money have been recovered from people, many of who served in Jonathan's administration or had ties to it. The

arrowhead of Buhari's war against corruption is the EFCC, headed by Ibrahim Magu. Magu had replaced Ibrahim Lamorde in an acting capacity. However when the President sent his name to the Senate for confirmation, it was rejected twice. The Senators based their decision on a report on Magu by the Department of State Security Services, saying that he was unfit for the job. The DSS report revealed that Magu had ties with a man who was under investigation for corruption, and also accused him of living above his means. Despite his being rejected twice, the presidency has made no move to replace Magu, as it says he is the best man for the job. This has not gone down well with some observers who have questioned whether there are no other Nigerians with similar, if not better credentials, who can lead the anti-corruption war. Their view is that what Nigeria needs to fight corruption effectively is a strong institution, not strong men.

To the question of whether a 'strong man' or strong institutions are the antidote to crime, Okorie says he would prefer strong institutions because they endure over time while their leaders have definite tenure.

Biriomoni, however, believes that Nigeria "needs both strong institutions and strong men."

Towards attaining SDG-16

For Nigeria to achieve lasting peace, justice and strong institutions by 2030, its institutions will need to be revamped, and the welfare of officials in the crime and justice departments improved. There may also be a need to restructure the polity to decentralize power and allow the states to implement far reaching decisions on security. At present, Nigeria's security apparatus is federally controlled. This explains why orders given to the Commissioner of Police posted to any state by the Inspector-General of Police in Abuja take precedence over any instructions given to such Commissioner by the state governor, with the IGP being subject to orders from the President. That apart, the states have no constitutionally-backed security organs of their own as calls for state police have been rebuffed by the federal authorities. Not a few Nigerians believe that some of the challenges faced by Nigeria in different areas including security can be fixed by restructuring the system. Unless that is done, stakeholders like Okorie do not "foresee Nigeria attaining any of the targets of the sustainable development goals by the year 2030."

To Mark Ibekwe, a Lagos-based lawyer, the present structure of the Nigerian State is "unfair, inequitable and lopsided". To ensure peace and justice the Nigerian state must be restructured to ensure "true federalism" since according to him: "Without true federalism the country is doomed."

However, in line with the dictates of SDG-16, the Nigerian government says that it is working relentlessly to significantly reduce all forms of violence and find lasting solutions to conflict and insecurity. It also says that it is strengthening the rule of law and promoting human rights, which are regarded as key to the peace process. The Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami said that the Buhari administration is focused on laying a solid foundation for a sustainable reform of the judicial system where the rule of law takes pre-eminence over and above the rule of man. ■

