

Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of a Mono-Culture Economy: The Case of Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria's quest for rapid socio-economic development prompted the harnessing and exploitation of her human and natural resources. The exploration of these resources formed the platform of the socio-economic agenda of all administrations in the country. However the discovery and subsequent exploitation of petroleum changed the face and direction of the economy as agriculture was relegated to the background. The exportation of crude oil presented a major source of foreign exchange and subsequently, increased the revenue base of government as petroleum plays a very significant role in the economy by contributing substantially to export earnings and government's total revenues. This large revenue base was expected to trigger accelerated national development and improve the quality of life of the people. This paper posits that, rather than improving the lot of the people, the exploitation of oil resources which has turned Nigeria to a mono-culture economy has exacerbated national under-development. This is because the neglect of agriculture and other sectors of the economy made it impossible for any backward integration of the economy. The paper concludes by suggesting ways by which accrued revenue from petroleum products will enhance socio-economic development of the country and thereby improve the quality of life of the people.

Keywords: Nigeria, Oil, Exploitation, Economy, Development

1. Introduction

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and the sixth in the world with a population of over 167 million (The Nation, 28, December, 2006; The Guardian, 27, October, 2011).

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It covers a land area of 923, 718 square kilometers, stretching from the coastal southern part of mangrove and tropical rain forest vegetation to the northern part of savannah vegetation. The country is endowed with many natural resources of which petroleum is the most prominent. Nigeria is the 12th largest producer of the product, the 8th largest exporter as well as having the 10th largest proven reserves in the world (Wikipedia, 2011). Thus, petroleum plays a very significant role in the economy by contributing 40% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 95% of export earnings and 80% of government's total earnings (African Peer Review Mechanism [APRM] 2008). However, the country's economic development had been hindered by years of military rule, mismanagement and corruption (Adefolaju, 2008).

In recent times, the country has attained a middle income status and emerging as the largest economy in Africa (Vanguard, April, 7, 2014). Nigeria's natural gas deposit is also estimated at about 174 trillion cubic feet (the equivalent of 30 billion barrels of crude oil) and is expected to last for over 100 years at present rate of exploitation (National Planning Commission, [NPC] 2004). There is also abundant agricultural resources and products such as cocoa, groundnut, palm-products, cassava, rubber and yam, among others, most of which have been exploited and making substantial contributions to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Many of these resources however have not been tapped to full capacity ostensibly due to greater emphasis on crude oil exploitation. In spite of the availability and exploitation of all these huge human and natural resources, can Nigeria claim to be on the path of sustainable socio-economic development and consequently an improvement in the quality of life of the citizens?. The main thrust of this paper therefore is to examine the exploitation of oil in Nigeria and its attendant impact on the citizens.

1.1 Socio-Economic Development in Context

All nations have shown keen interest in their development and have propounded various strategies for attaining it. It has always been a question of "where are we from?", "where are we now?" and "where do we want to be?". On the minds of these nations therefore, is the issue of 'progress', which appears to arise from their dissatisfaction with their present state. They therefore yearn for improvement and progress. Development therefore occupies a central space in their mode of governance, attracting a lot of global attention in the last few decades.

In the quest to 'move' forward, countries have experimented with many paradigms of development. Yet this yearning for change has not been justified by many nations, perhaps owing to the fact that nobody knows the 'terminus' of development.

This is especially so with the Third World countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, which arising from their colonial background, have had to experiment with many models of development, mostly on the dictates of former colonial masters. Development has always been seen as being tantamount to progress. Fundamentally this has been seen to arise from the process of social change, which involves an analysis of the past, an understanding of the present and conscious effort to shape the future. According to Ejionye (1978), the awareness of social change was explicit in the works of early philosophers who posit that modern societies have tended to evolve from simple or traditional communities to complex industrial societies. This perhaps has informed the classification of world nations today into 'developing' and 'developed' countries, or 'industrializing' and 'industrialized' countries, among others. Another dimension is the fact that the industrialized societies themselves are passing through another stage of development, as they are now at the post-industrial level. It is taken, therefore, that the evolutionary trend was from 'primitive' to the feudal and pre-industrial stage, in that linear form.

We can then deduce that the concept 'development' first occurred to man through the process of reasoning and ideas. This is discernible from the French Revolution, which Ejionye (1978), sees as the child of reason and advocacy. According to Cole (1981), development, a concept that refers to the existence of a gap between the rich and the poor countries, is both controversial and emotional. Development and the process by which these goals should be striven for, unavoidably depend on the values of the people as well as on facts that are, in principle, falsifiable. For instance, where does development start and end? It is agreed however that development implies a change or movement, which may be positive or negative.

More often, the general tendency is to see development as positive, be it the development of a piece of land, the psychological development of a person or the physical development of a country.

Generally therefore, the emphasis of development is its impact on man and his society. Development therefore makes a society better than what it was through the concerted efforts of members of the society. As development in human society is a multi-faceted process, its objectives usually hover at the all-round improvement of human beings. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, responsibility, self-discipline and material well-being. It also involves the creation of opportunities for the realization of human potentials. As it involves all facets of human life- economic, social, cultural, technological etc.- development plans and programmes must be designed to have great beneficial impact. Development would have occurred, therefore, when there has been an important improvement in basic needs of people and when economic progress has contributed to a greater sense of self-esteem for the country and individuals within it. It would have also occurred when material advancement has expanded the range of choice for the individual.

Thirlwall (1983) has identified three main goals of development, viz: life sustenance, self-esteem and freedom. Life sustenance is concerned with the provision of basic needs. The basic needs approach to development was initiated by the World Bank in the 1970s. No country can be regarded as fully developed if it cannot provide her people with basic necessities of life such as decent housing, clothing, food, health and minimal education. A major objective of development must, therefore, be to raise people out of primary poverty and to provide basic needs simultaneously. Self-esteem implies the feeling of self-respect and independence. Any country that is exploited by others and does not possess the power and influence to conduct relations on equal or mutual terms cannot be regarded as developed. Countries consequently seek development for self-esteem in order to remove the feelings of dominance and dependence associated with inferior economic status. Similarly, freedom as a goal means liberation from the evils of want, ignorance and squalor. This will enable people to be more able to determine their own destiny. This is because no man is free, if he cannot make a choice, if he is "imprisoned by living in the margin of subsistence with no education and no skills" (Thirlwall, 1983).

The United Nation Development Programme [UNDP] (1995), posits that human development is the process of "enlarging peoples choices" and these choices are generally endless and have time variability.

However within all levels of development, the three essential ones are for people to live a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have a decent standard of living. These abilities are a pre-condition for accessing other opportunities. Other choices designed by people range from economic, political and social freedom, to opportunities for being creative, productive, and for guaranteed human rights and enjoying personal self-respect. Nigeria appears vulnerable on all these indices of development despite her enormous human and natural resources. Rather than facing the challenges of development, the Nigerian state busies herself warding off various centrifugal forces that are impeding socio-economic development. Agbakoba (1996), captures the state of the Nigerian nation when he posits that:

By 1994, 90 million Nigerians had no access to safe water to drink in spite of huge resources and endowments. Social infrastructures have declined to a point where staying alive is a hazard. The cause of all these sufferings are really and easily identifiable - a rapacious, corrupt and unaccountable government of military and civil rulers.

2. Oil Resource Exploitation In Nigeria: An Overview

Agriculture was the mainstay of the Nigerian economy prior to 1970, as it served as the biggest source of foreign exchange. The sector contributed about 60 percent of Gross Domestic Products (GDP), more than 70 percent foreign exchange earnings and 90 percent source of employment (Nigeria Institute of Social and Economic Research [NISER] 2001). However, the full scale exploitation of oil around this period meant the relegation of the agricultural sector to the background as it managed to contribute only 31 percent to the GDP by the early 1980s (Canagarajah, und.). This sharp decline in production was due largely to inexpensive imports, triggered by appreciated exchange rate and increased demand for construction labour which also stimulated rural-urban migration. Nigeria which was self-sufficient in food supply and also a net exporter of agricultural product in the 1960s, quickly declined and became a net importer of agricultural commodities. This phenomenon otherwise known as the "Dutch Disease" occurs when resources boom cause real exchange to rise and labour and capital to migrate to the booming sector (Karl, 2007; Canagarajah, und.). The consequence of this is higher costs and reduced competitiveness for domestically produced goods and services.

By the early 1970s, Nigeria had shifted attention to the oil sector to the detriment of all other sectors of production, especially agriculture, resulting in the steady decline in the share of non-oil exports and corresponding increase in oil exports. In 1960, for instance, oil exports contributed 2.7 percent to total exports as against 97.3 percent contributed by non-oil exports. However, oil export took a leap from about 58 percent of total exports in 1970 to 97 percent between 1980 and 1984 and subsequently created the following scenarios:

- That oil exploration had taken the centre stage in contributions to the Gross Domestic Products (GDP) and as the highest foreign exchange earner,
- This over-reliance on a single product invariably exposed the country's economy to risks and created situations where shocks threatened the fiscal balance and stability of the economy,
- With a contribution of over 40 percent of Gross Domestic Products (GDP) and over 80 percent of government's earnings, petroleum now plays a significant role in the national economy,
- Revenues from oil increased from ₦ 219 million in 1970 to ₦ 10.6 billion in 1979 (Dabbs, 1996).

Expectations were therefore high that government access to the much needed funds would propel the development of the country. This expectedly would lead to enhanced economic growth and the creation and improvement of infrastructural facilities. This encouraged the government to implement a series of programmes, within the past 30 years, to become self reliant. Many of these development programmes which were designed for the disadvantaged groups include:

- The Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFFRI) 1986,
- The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) 1986,
- The Better Life Programme (BLP) 1987,
- The People's Bank of Nigeria (PBN) 1989,
- Community Banks (CB) 1990,
- The Family Support Programme (FSP) 1994, and
- The Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) 1997.

Given the prevailing level of poverty, it is safe to say that these programmes did not achieve their objectives of fostering self-reliance. Reasons adduced for this are:

- The lack of effective mechanisms for coordination,
- Lack of country ownership in view of the top-down approach that left out grassroots participation in both the design and the implementation of plans and programmes,
- Inadequate funding,
- Mismanagement and the diversion of resources for personal enrichment through corruption and looting practices,
- The politicisation of national and regional programmes for self political positioning, lack of coherent policies, and
- Poor linkages and lack of a clear underpinning and guiding vision (APRM, 2008).

Government has however remained undaunted and has resolved to face these challenges with a new programme of economic revival encapsulated in the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy [NEEDS] in 2004. According to Prof. Ojowu, the then Economic Adviser to President Obasanjo, 'the NEEDS is the country's plan for prosperity. Unlike past development approaches, the NEEDS is focused and reform-based (Ojowu, 2004). NEEDS agenda is therefore programmed to pave way for improvement in Nigeria's development in line with the aspirations of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), of reducing by half the poverty level by 2015 (Federal Government of Nigeria [FGN] 2010).

3. Oil Exploitation in Nigeria and the Circle of Poverty

Any country that largely depends on a single product for export earnings exposes itself to risks arising from the vagaries of the world commodity price instability. Oil, regarded as a wasting asset, appears a special commodity with some characteristics. Karl (2007) identifies them as:

- i. a unique role as both common natural heritage of a country and the motor of globalization,
- ii. its depletable nature,
- iii. its price volatility and consequent boom-bust cycles,

- iv. its especially high capital-intensity and technological sophistication,
- v. its enclave nature, and,
- vi. the exceptional generation of profits that accrue to the state and to private actors.

He calls these factors “paradox of plenty” or the “resource curse”.

However the problems caused by the exploitation of oil are not located in the commodity itself but how it is managed. This is because a commodity can either be beneficial or detrimental to the community/society. Thus viewed from the Human Development Index (HDI), the exploitation of oil in Nigerian cannot be said to be beneficial to the generality of the people. The Human Development Index (HDI) measures the standards of living, life expectancy, literacy and education of countries worldwide on a comparative level (Wikipedia, 2011). It is a measurement of distinguishing the status of a country whether developed, developing or under-developed and to determine the impact of economic policies on quality of life of the people. From these outcomes, countries are categorized as high, medium or low in human development, and Nigeria is categorized as a medium human development country. With a 0.423 score, it is in the 25th position in Africa and 142nd in the world (World Bank, 2011).

This resource curse is attributable to some factors such as (Karl, 2007; Canagarajah, und.).

- i) Oil windfalls do hurt other sectors of the economy by pushing up the real exchange rate of the currency and thereby making most other exports non-competitive. Called the ‘Dutch Disease’, it is more pronounced when the boom that started the problem reverses itself. In Nigeria, the lull in the oil sector which led to a fall in revenue between 1980 and 1986 left the economy bare with an unsustainable import and capital intensive production structure. This led many farm workers to migrate to urban sector in search of higher nominal (temporary) wages.
- ii) The long-term price deflation and price volatility of the international primary commodities market are disruptive of economic development. This has been prevalent since 1970 when oil prices were twice as variable as those of other commodities. This volatility puts negative influence on investment, income distribution and poverty alleviation.

- iii) The enclave nature of the industry together with its capital intensity fosters weak linkages to the broader economy and does not create much employment. As the world's most capital intensive industry fewer jobs are created per unit of capital invested, and the skills required by these jobs usually do not fit the profile of the unemployed.
- iv) Countries that are dependent on oil exports are usually susceptible to policy failure. This is due to the weakness of pre-existing institutions where oil export is found, their frequently authoritarian character and the transformative power of the export sector.

In the case of Nigeria, this has been worsened by high dependence on the oil sector and the resultant lack of diversification of economic activities, mismanagement and embezzlement of resources/funds by those in leadership positions. Oil bunkering/bandit activities which undermine the nation's capacity to fully exploit its oil potentials, incessant labour disputes/strikes due to government's inability to meet the expectations of workers, and the unrest, particularly, in the Niger Delta also contributed to this problems (APRM, 2008). In a similar vein, Mr Alfred Dowden, the Director of African Society, London, recently identified endemic corruption, bad politics, failed economic policies, over-dependence on oil, favouritism for appointments and the country's bad reputation for the continued slow pace of development. He further noted that with the discovery of oil the country lacked initiatives (Vanguard, 28, September, 2011).

The social consequence of the resource curse is that countries solely dependent on oil exports have unusually high poverty rates, poor health care, high rates of child mortality, and poor educational performance. This is caused much because of the inability of such countries to diversify from oil dependence into other self-sustaining economic activities particularly agriculture and labour-intensive industry. A former Minister of Education, Dr Oby Ezekwezi recently noted that the rising level of poverty in Nigeria was due to poor governance and the monotonous economic structure of the country (The Punch, 23, October, 2013).

This has led to a dramatic fall in the living standards of the people. In the case of Nigeria, the disparity between oil wealth and poverty is remarkable.

According to Karl (2007), Nigeria had generated over \$300 billion in oil profits over the past 25 years, yet the number of people living below the United Nation's (UN) absolute poverty line of \$1 per day grew from 27 percent in 1980 to 66 percent in 1996. He further notes that income disparities are shocking: the richest 10 percent controls 40 percent of the country's wealth and its poorest 20 percent has a share of just 4.4 percent.

Countries dependent on oil earnings also display unusually high rates of child mortality and child nutrition, low life expectancy, poor health care, and reduced expenditures on education as well as other sectors of the economy. The Nigerian government spends about \$2 per person/ year on health care, a far cry from the \$34 per year recommended for developing countries by the World Health Organization (WHO). Furthermore as against the world average of 26.5 malnourished children per thousand, the rate is 37.7 per thousand in oil-rich Nigeria. Generally, the country lacks basic socio-economic infrastructures like good road networks, electricity supply and portable water, among others.

The infant mortality rate for 2008 was 100, and over 800 women die out of every 100,000 live births annually from pregnancy- and delivery-related medical complications. This is about 55,000 deaths, 10 percent of world's total due to pregnancy-related complications (The Compass, 30 April, 2009). All these account for relatively stable but high rates of deaths and reducing life expectancy in Nigeria. The human development report for Nigeria puts life expectancy at 53 years in 1990, 50 years in 2003 and 47 years in 2008. It is currently 46.6 years (Wikipedia, 2011). In the 2011 M. O. Ibrahim African Governance rating report, Nigeria is rated 41st among 53 countries in Africa, a slide from 40th in 2010. The causal factors of health care failure in Nigeria are:

- Poor implementation of programmes, for example the 'roll-back malaria' programme is reported to be 'seriously constrained' in the delivery of insecticide-treated mosquito nets to rural areas, combined with limited investment in raising public awareness about the relationship between malaria and poor sanitation,
- Poor health facilities and lack of infrastructure which have resulted in a negative view of state health facilities, especially in the rural areas. In many states, for example, bad roads had impeded the delivery of drugs to people in the villages,

- Lack of an all-inclusive health insurance scheme accessible to all Nigerians especially the unemployed and the poor,
- Rural/urban and class differentials in access to quality healthcare- the poor and rural population are less likely to access quality health care than the rich and the urban dwellers,
- Community resistance to child immunisation. In some communities in Nigeria, there is some degree of fear or mistrust of immunisation schemes which are seen to conflict with cultural and religious beliefs or viewed as potentially harmful (for example the Polio immunisation programme),
- Inadequate supply of physicians: the ratio of doctors to population ranges from 4300 in 1990; 3707 in 1995 and 3179 in 2005 and more than 70 percent of these personnel and others are concentrated in urban areas,
- Poor access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Only 53 percent of Nigerians have access to clean water,
- Shortage of drugs, infrastructural facilities, and work attitudes of the health workers and the elitist philosophy of health education (Oluwadare, 2010; APRM, 2008; Wikipedia, 2011).

The education sector also suffers neglect in countries that are dependent on oil resources. The non-chalant attitude towards the development of their human resources due to inadequate attention and low expenditure, affects future prospects for growth. Consequently the educational system in Nigeria, experienced deep crises for many years. According to the Nigerian government:

Adult literacy rate was relatively poor at 57%. Only 50% of school age children were in school in June, 1997 --- while enrolment ranged between 10% and 30% in others. There has been an increasing rate of school drop outs in recent years and the quality of education has fallen significantly at all levels (Federal Government of Nigeria [FGN] 2000).

Chidi Odinkalu, Chairman, National Human Rights Commission further summarized the state of education in Nigeria thus:

The educational system is in such a bad shape, it has become a threat to co-existence, national productivity and competitions, and national security..... Adult literacy (15+), are well below 50% of the population; 38.38% for women; 59.38% for males or an average of 48.66% for the adult population or a total adult literate population estimated at about 21,823,300. Net secondary school enrolment is 26.95%: 24.93% for girls and 28.88% for boys. UNESCO estimates that over 10.5million children in Nigeria do not have access to education. Nigeria ranks last – 136th - of 136 countries surveyed by UNESCO with reference to public spending on education as a proportion of GDP, the proportion of public spending on education in Nigeria as a percentage of GDP is 0.89%. Education expenditure as a proportion of Gross National Income (GNI) is 0.85% or 167th out of 168 countries. (Premium Times, Sep. 25, 2013)

Most countries have accelerated sustainable socio-economic transformation largely with the use of her vast human and natural resources to alleviate poverty and to harness the potentials of the citizens for self-actualisation and to ensure promotion and protection of their individual welfare. It is obvious that the readily available mechanism for this mission and fighting poverty is education. APRM (2008), reports that education recieved low priority in the 1980s and a fall in budgetary allocation. This has led to the present state characterised by:

Decayed and crumbling infrastructure, an inappropriate educational curriculum at all levels, funding constraints, gender gaps, poorly trained teachers and low staff motivation (APRM, 2008)

Today the adult literacy rate (% ages 15 and above) is 71.0%, while comparable adult illiteracy rate is 29.0%. The education expenditure share of Gross National Products(GNP) is a mere 0.7% and education's share of the annual budget is below 10% as against the recommendation of a minimum of 26% by UNESCO.

Curiously, the management of oil resources in Nigeria rather than contributing positively towards the economic growth of the country and consequently an improved quality of life, has on the other hand, fostered some other problems for the country. Oil exploitation has had severe environmental and human consequences for the indigenous communities in areas surrounding oil extraction (Dabbs,1996).

In spite of the huge revenues from oil, the indigenous communities in these areas received little or no economic benefits.

They are further impoverished due to environmental degradation from oil production and have become very vulnerable to food shortages, health hazards, loss of land, pollution, forced migration and unemployment. Much of the wildlife and biodiversity have been destroyed. There is loss of fertile soil, pollution of air and drinking water, degradation of farmlands and damage to aquatic ecosystems, leading to serious health problems for the inhabitants. There are also oil spills and the dumping of oil into waterways thereby poisoning drinking water and destroying vegetation.

Another inadvertent but negative consequence of oil exploitation is that it has created a culture of violence especially in the Niger Delta region. Violence has become a reactive instrument used by people to achieve their goals (Abe, 2008).

In the face of environmental degradation, pollution, unemployment and many other social vices in the oil producing region of Nigeria, the youths there have resorted to violence. Oil exploitation has therefore fostered aggression against the state, against oil producing companies, and inter-communal rivalry which sometimes turned violent. This is as a result of deprivation of social services by the oil companies and the Nigerian state. This usually leads to conflict as the companies are engaged in the process of collaborating with government to use violence as a means of pacifying the protesting communities (Worgu, 2000). The orgy of violence especially in the oil producing area of the country, the Niger Delta, has not only hamstrung oil exploitation itself, but has led to incessant crisis and insecurity in the country. This has adverse effect on investment as potential investors (especially foreign) would be scared away, with the consequence of stimulating further poverty.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The on-going discourse has located the impact of oil exploitation on the Nigeria state and the citizens as well. It is apparent that successive administrations in the country have concentrated on oil exploration to the detriment of other natural/mineral resources and thereby diminishing their contributions to the over-all development of the country.

Rather than this being the problem per se, it is the way the Nigerian state has deployed the accrued revenue towards the development of the country. The decadent state of infrastructural facilities and lack of social amenities in the country is a testimony to the quality of life of the people. To say the least, this belies the subsisting national wealth.

This low level of development has engendered mass unemployment, poverty, corruption and various other negative tendencies inimical to the well-being of the people. The low level human development in the country in concert with other indices, has cast a doubt on the ability of the country in attaining the objectives of both the MDGs in 2015, and the Nigerian Vision 20: 20:20. This will no doubt lead to the vicious circle of more poverty and the possibility of negative reactions and social conflicts. Avoidable as these are, it behoves government to earnestly put in place policies and programmes that would enable rapid development of the country. It is therefore obvious that Nigeria's attempt to meet up its developmental goals would require a conscious attempt that will lead to:

- * the diversification of the economy from oil to agriculture; as a matter of priority money from oil should be used to develop the agricultural sector which is capable of not only providing food and other raw materials for the manufacturing sector, but also creating mass employment,
- * deliberate and conscious effort to develop the non-oil sector of the economy,
- * providing a conducive environment for private sector participation in economic development,
- * revamp the social sector, that is, education, health and other related areas,
- * institutionalisation of transparency in governance; deliberate efforts should be made to curb the rising tide of corruption in the polity as well as intensifying reforms in the public sector,
- * strong leadership that will superintend over the country's efforts at attaining a high level development by providing infrastructures that will enable her people to live a long and healthy life, acquire knowledge and have a decent standard of living.

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