NATIONAL ECONOMIC EMANCIPATION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (NEEDS): A SPRINGBOARD FOR NIGERIAN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

National Economic Emancipation and Development Strategy (NEEDS) is government response to the fight against poverty, hunger and underdevelopment in Nigeria from the federal level to the local level. This strategy provides a well-articulated blueprint that has helped governments drive home their efforts towards sustainable and national development. But, unfortunately, this programme has not thrived the way it was planned; from the federal, state and to the local level, owing to some political, economic and social problems. The objective of this study is to critically phantom those impediments to the smooth running of this programme and proffer workable solutions that would further institute the programme and make it functional. The development theory anchored on the sociological and anthropological modernization theory was used in analysing the work. The significance of this study is that it has outlined solutions for countries whose economic state are in recession and it equally answered the question nations ask on how to model reforms to meet the contemporary economies. This paper presents a balanced analysis on the activities of NEEDS in the country and recommends for the Nigerian government to take decisive action in implementing the objectives of this programme while calling on the National Assembly to initiate and pass enabling laws that would institutionalize the programme with penalties for offenders.

Introduction

Nigeria is Africa’s most populous nation with approximately 140 million people going by the 2006, census and is richly endowed with human and material resources stretching from the North to the Southern part of country. The country is located in the Western part of Africa and shares land borders with four countries which includes, The Republic of Benin in the West, Chad and Cameroon in the West and Niger in the North and has its coast in the South lying on the Gulf of Guinea on the Atlantic Ocean. As a nation which was amalgamated in 1914 by Lord Lugard, its then Governor general has three major ethnic groups namely: - Ibo, Hausa and Yoruba with its two major religion as Christianity and Islam notwithstanding the traditional worshippers that has a negligible number.

With the entrant of globalization which came like a whirled wind to nations, the Nigerian government has done its own beat to key into the new world economic order which opens the market for nations to tap into other nation’s economy. The Nigerian government has equally
started implementing economic reforms that would strengthen her economic environment and unbundle some sectors which *ab initio* was in the strong hands of government.

Interestingly, Nigeria possesses the human and material resources that could launch her as one of the richest nation in Africa and a major player in the world political economy. Nigeria, a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is the seventh largest oil producer and has highly valued sources of energy, especially its substantial reserves of petroleum and natural gas. Notwithstanding the huge income that Nigeria gets from the exportation of over 2.3 million barrels of oil every day, it has continued to suffer from poor economic stability, low industrial capacity, lack of qualitative education, epileptic power supply, high rate of unemployment, ineptitude and corruption in her civil and public service coupled with other societal predicaments which have caused our macro and micro economic indicators to signal danger.

The military governments which ruled Nigeria could be blamed for institutionalizing some of these factors that has made the nation limp economically. With the return of civil administration in Nigeria in 1999, the government of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo launched some economic reforms designed to address the structural and industrial weaknesses besieging the country. The economic reform plan includes acceleration of privatization, deregulation and liberalization of the key sectors of the economy, fiscal and monetary reforms, infrastructural development, greater transparency, accountability and institutionalization of anti-corruption agencies such as the economic and financial crimes commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commissions (ICPC). It was in a bid to encapsulate all these strategies and economic programmes in one fold that in March, 2004 that the government of the day institutionalized the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) to become the operational mechanism that would drive the economy at the Federal level for a holistic sustainable development in the country. The federal government urged the state and local governments to collaborate with it in this economic movement by implementing equivalent programs based on the NEEDS model known as State Economic Empowerment Strategy (SEEDS) and Local Economic Empowerment and Strategy (LEEDS) at their levels respectively.

According to Obasanjo (2004) NEEDS was specifically designed to lay a solid foundation for sustainable poverty reduction, employment generation, wealth creation and value oriented economy. This means that NEEDS has a programme that would boost the economy of Nigeria and build a strong economic base which will have the capacity to welcome investors whether international or national. In collaborating with the then president, his minister, Dr. Okonjo Iwela (2005) stated that poverty reduction and wealth creation were dependent on the private sector to grow the economy and provide jobs and on the public sector to provide an enabling environment for development. The private sector getting into the economy means deregulating the sectors for optimal growth and competitiveness which gives citizens choice and quality products and services. This deregulation is the removal of government controls from an industry or sector to allow for a free and efficient market place.

Therefore, the bedrock of NEEDS is its vision of a Nigeria with new set of reforms, values and principles which will facilitate the unbundling of the economic sectors in the country to facilitate the achievements of national economic goals of wealth creation, poverty reduction, transparency and employment generation which provides for sustainable development in the country.

- Wealth creation: This is the ability to fashion out sources of empowering individuals to generate resources for the common good of the society.
- Poverty reduction: This involves the improving of the conditions of people who are poor and this has taken effect as a result of overall economic growth.
• Transparency: This is the ability of the government or individuals to transact the business of governance or private business in such a way that nothing is done secretly to avoid compromising ethical standards.

• Employment generation: This is the ability of government to create jobs through its programmes for wealth creation.

The objective of this article is to provide a critical review on the performance of NEEDS towards poverty reduction in Nigeria and make a balanced critique of its objective towards developing sustained economic growth in the country.

NEEDS differs from earlier development plans in three important ways:
(a) It is the peoples plan for prosperity.
(b) It Coordinates action at the federal, state and local levels.
(c) It is a feasible plan.

CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS
Theories are an attempt to bind together in a systematic fashion the knowledge that one has some particular aspect of the world of experience (Ruse, in Honderich, 1995:870). They can be made up of connected law-like statements and/or behavioural postulates which make claims about the real world, or they can be constituted by conceptual categorizations that serve to systematically organize disconnected facts about observable phenomena. In whatever manifestation, for a predictive or explanatory theory to say anything there must be a relationship between the statements made, the methods used to make such statements, and the frame of reference deployed to inform such methods. In each of these respects there are issues pertaining to the nature of reality (i.e., ontology) and how knowledge of that reality is possible (i.e., epistemology), the adoption of which will encourage the use of particular methods and the kinds of statements possible for a theory to make. To put in another way, the methods used and the conclusions reached via the use of theory are inescapably presupposed by some form of ontological and epistemological reasoning in short, by the type of conceptual view one holds of the world (Abbot, 2006:197). The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which is a developmental plan action, well-articulated by the United Nations was established following a Millennium Summit has embarked on total reforms which are aimed at poverty reduction and socio-economic development. Nigeria being in league with the Millennium Development goals has been making effort towards poverty reduction and better standard of living. Poverty reduction and socio-economic development could be a direct measure to weigh a country’s development. Development is the process of economic and social transformation that is based on complex cultural and environmental factors and their interactions while it is the extent to which man is able to do this in a progressively better manner that is the true measure of his development. Development theory which we are going to use for the conceptualization of this work is a conglomeration or a collective vision of theories about how desirable change in the society is best achieved. We narrowed it down to the sociological and anthropological modernization theory which is derived from the idea of progress, which stated that people can develop and change their society themselves. Marquis De Condorcet was involved in the origin of this theory. This theory also states that technological advancements and economic changes can lead to changes in moral and cultural values.

NEEDS, PUBLIC POLICY: THE NEXUS
Public policy as a concept means a lot to different scholars based on their perception of the concept and the environment they see themselves.
Chris (2005) simply defines policy as a principle to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes. A policy statement of intent, and is implanted as a procedure. David Easton defines
public policy as the “authoritative allocation of value of the whole society.” Laswell Caplan defines it as a “projected programmes of goals, values and practice.” Karl Fredrick says it is” a proposed course of action of an individual, group or government within a given environment providing obstacles and opportunities which the policy wishes to overcome and utilize in an effort to reach a goal or realize an objective (See E.O. Chukwuemeka, 2008).

Public policy is the principled guide to action taken by the administrative executive branches of the state with regard to class of issues in a manner consistent with law and institutional customs. The foundation of public policy is composed on national constitutional laws and regulations. Further substrates include both judicial interpretations and regulations which are generally authorized by legislation. All these definitions extol the existence of a definite goal or purpose. But Thomas Dye strongly believes that government must have a purpose and a goal must be attached to it before a policy is passed.

The Government of Nigeria during the Chief Olusegun Obansanjo regime taught it wise to establish the NEEDS programme. The programme as established was to solve the national problems which have not allowed the country and its citizens to compete in the international environment.

NEEDS as a public policy is geared towards the fulfilment of the obligations of government to the citizens, in the quest to maintain law and order, provide the necessary social and economic activities needed for an enhanced standard of living of the people over an extended period of time.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The concept of National development represents the narrow sense of development in that it is often used in an exclusive economic sense (Uche, 2011). According to Walter Rodney, development to human society is a many sided process. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creatively, self-discipline, reasonability and material well-being. A society develops economically as its members increase jointly the capacity for dealing with the environment. Oxford Concise Dictionary of politics sees development as a normative concept referring to a multidimensional process. Some people argue that development must be relative to time, place and circumstance, and dismiss any universal formula. It strongly believes that increased economic efficiency, expansion of national economic capacity, and technological advance are generally accepted as necessary conditions of development are to be sustained. It went further to say that increased national self-determination reduces external dependency that ultimately leads to internal cohesion that leads to growth and development.

Olewe (1995) opines that development means growth or change in planned growth. He believes that development does not centre on one sphere of life but includes social development, economic development, political development, or socio-political economic development.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), development leads to long and healthy lives, to be knowledgeable, to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living and to be able to participate in the life of the community. Buttressing National development from the above definitions of development, one could see that it is all about enhancing the well-being and standard of living of the people in general. According to former President Olusegun Obasanjo;

*The primary objective of national security shall be to strengthen the Federal Republic of Nigeria, to advance her interest and objectives to contain instability, control crime, eliminate corruption, enhance genuine development, progress and growth, and improve the welfare and well-being and quality of life of every citizen (Tyoden 2005:172-173).*
National development is the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people e.g. by providing social amenities, like quality education, portable water, transportation, infrastructure, medical care etc.

The Nigerian Government in its drive to ensure that lives of its citizens are adequately catered for, after two years of its independence landed the first National development plan in 1962 which has its core objectives as enforcing access to education, employment and health care. According to Ogwumike (1995), this plan failed because fifty percent of the resources needed to finance the plan was to come from external sources and only fourteen percent of the external finance was received.

Since then Nigeria has had other development plan been systematically formulated by the government with cognizance of the internal and external factors influencing them. In all, they have helped in building a strong, united and self reliant nation despite lack of clearly defined national objectives and aggregation of unrelated projects drawn up by the administrators on the basic of regional, rivalry and executed by trial and error. Some of these are the problems of national development in Nigeria which has even affected the NEEDS programme.

(a) Unavailability of accurate and reliable data. It is a nightmare to get any real data from any ministry, department and agency because they are ill equipped and still make use of obsolete technologies that can barely serve the contemporary times.

(b) Inflation – Due to the flow of foreign currency in and around the country, inflation continues to distort the economic plan as such it causes non-implementation of plans.

(c) Terrorism – this act has seriously affected the socio-political and economic environment in the country and has made security the top priority of government and as such, taken more finance from the government.

(d) Problem of executive capacity – There has been high rate of unskilled manpower to actualize government plans and objectives.

(e) Misappropriation of development funds has been seriously noted in the administration of national development programmes. Some projects are approved during the annual budget but they are not executed due to government failure to achieve set out objectives.

FUNDAMENTAL VALUES OF NEEDS.

As Koontz et al (1980: 72) states, Control must be based on plans and the clearer, more complete, and more integrated effective controls can be. There is no way of determining whether organizational units are accomplishing what is desired and expected unless they first know what is expected. The federal government taught it wise to outline the strategies which it hoped to lay a solid fundamental foundation for national rediscovery and values based on the following:

- Enterprise, competition and efficiency at all levels. By this the government tries to open up the market and allows for individuals to exercise their freedom in the market by removing all impediments to free market flow through privatization and friendly policies competition in the market at all levels.

- Moral rectitude, respect for tradition values and pride in Nigeria culture. This implies that the government through its agencies is to mandate their citizens to be of good moral standards and have faith in their nation.

- Equity and care for the weak and vulnerable. This means that the government should take it upon itself to ensure that equity prevails in all it does with the general public and make sure that the weak and the vulnerable do not suffer in such a competitive environment.

- A value system for public service that results in efficient and effective service delivery to the citizens.

- Discipline at all levels of government. Through the institutionalization of anticorruption agencies in Nigeria, officials and citizens are made to bear the consequences of any indiscipline act while dealing with the government or the public.
These core fundamental values of NEEDS have launched the programme as the most articulated programme for sustainable development in Nigeria. These values include:

I. NEEDS is geared towards empowering the people as it clearly reflects a valid partnership between the people and the government. The draft document of NEEDS was as a result of the responses of the people about their perception of their environment and what they need to develop as a people.

II. Needs itself has a programme that makes it abreast with all tiers of government for rapid development at all levels and for sustainable national development. At the state level, it has the State Economic Emancipation and Development Strategy (SEEDS) and Local Economic Emancipation and Development Strategy (LEEDS) at the local level. At these levels, the governments are to enroll and to take up development strategies to help facilitate the aims and objectives of the programme.

III. This programme NEEDS is the Nigerian response to address the international targets which was setup for human development, well-being, environmental sustainability and regeneration of the globe.

NEEDS through its policies wish to significantly eradicate poverty in Nigeria. It aims to create a Nigeria that Nigerians can be proud to belong to and grateful to inhabit, a Nigeria that promotes self-reliance, entrepreneurship, innovation, reward, hard work, protect its people and their property and offers its children better prospects than those they may be tempted seek in Europe or the United Sates (National Planning Commission and Central Bank of Nigeria, 2005:4).

THE NEEDS POLICY THRUST
The policy thrust of NEEDS in Nigeria is simply to attain sustainable development in all spheres of the Nigerian economy. This thrust serves as the primary consciences of the strategy of NEEDS.

They include the following:

- According to IMF country report, NEEDS proposes bold step to plug leakages in order to achieve macro-economic stability and support a more efficient use of resources to grow the economy.
- Sustain a rapid, broad based GDP growth rate outside of the oil sector that is consistent with poverty reduction, employment generation, and a sustainable development. This means that NEEDS advocates for a Nigeria of multi facets economy not dependent on any major sector. This would help generate more revenue to the country, increase job opportunities which would encourage rapid national growth. With this types of thrust sustained, a vibrant economy is assured.
- Diversify the production structure away from oil and mineral resources. This implies that NEEDS has in its goal to ensure that other productive sectors of the economy encouraged for optimal national sustainable growth.
- Make the productive sector internationally competitive. NEEDS encourages the government to ensure international competitions with other countries through producing and encouraging standardization in all its products. This would increase foreign direct investment and encourage quality.
- Systematically reduce the role of government in the direct production of goods and strengthen its facilitating and regulatory functions. NEEDS preaches a competitive economy which encourages capitalism. It believes that government has no business in business rather create an enabling environment where producer would have the opportunity to compete with each other under fair government regulation which is not biased.

These policy thrust of NEEDS serves as a springboard for the economic development and rejuvenation of Nigeria. In achieving these thrusts, NEEDS has its own strategy to achieve these lots. These key strategies are:
Privatize, deregulate and liberalize key sectors of the economy. The federal government has since keyed into this strategy by allowing foreign and local investors to invest in the major sectors of the economy such as the oil sector. Thus has not only promoted local content but has encouraged employment and a rise on the Gross Domestic Product.

Coordinate national sectorial development strategies for agriculture, industry (especially small and medium-size enterprise), and services (especially tourism). Today in Nigeria, the federal government has initiated many programmes to ensure that the Agricultural sector of the economy gets a facelift. Fertilizers today are almost giving for gratis and real farmers are giving loans to boost their produce and the federal government has built more irrigation sites in the Northern part of the country to ensure adequate harvest even during the dry season. The small and medium scale industry through the Bank of Industry (BOI) has been seriously motivated for all round growth in the economy.

Develop infrastructures, especially electricity, transport, and water. The present government has really done which in this regard. Today, due to the privatization of the power sector, there has being an increase in power generation throughout the country and this has really helped sustain the small and medium enterprise in the country. The transportation sector has really got a boost through the revitalization of the railway sector and the purchase of buses through SURE-P funding.

Address the problems of financing the real sector, and mobilize long term savings and investment.

Create and regulatory regimes that module environmental standards.

Target programmes to promote private sector growth and development.

All these economic boosts driven strategy are all geared towards a better society that would alleviate poverty and encourage independency and growth in the nation.

Hindrances Towards NEEDS Achievement

The National Economic Empowerment and Development strategy has come as a noble framework which was carefully articulated to solve the Nigeria economic problems. Recently in the country may factors has stood against the dreams of this strategy the stem from economic, political, social religious and cultural. All these could be encapsulated in the following.

Terrorism: Today the worst man made epidemic that has eaten deep and devastated the Nigerian economy is terrorism. In Nigeria the terror organization that has kept citizens restless and killed many is known as Boko Haram which means Western education is sin. This Hydra headed monster has destroyed all efforts of government to develop the nation most especially in the North East. They kill, and abduct citizens, destroy homes and properties burn government institutions such as police stations, schools, etc. Due to the fear of these terrorists, citizen are afraid to go the North east areas to stay or do business and the foreign investors has collapsed their businesses there and relocated to more safer countries.

Weak Leadership at the Centre. The leadership of the country has not used its power to ensure strict obedience to the thrust of this strategy. The government does not use the enabling laws of the land to punish those who do not abide by the rules of engagement in the country. The capital flight in the country has become worrisome as offenders are treated with kid gloves.

Social conflict. The economic and social squabbles have really caused internal conflicts which have affected the implementation of NEEDS. Wanton destruction of lives and properties destroys had earned programmes; this which has been put in place for years but are raised down by one social conflict or the other. These are uncertainties with have the potential of discouraging domestic and foreign investors.

Environmental factors: Environmental degradation is sometimes natural or man-made. This reduces the opportunities the poor people in the society get from using the natural resources.
available to them to achieve sustainable development. Empirically in Nigeria, more than 75 percent of rural dwellers depend on natural resources for their day to day business.

- Discrimination against women. In Nigeria, women are really discriminated against in all spheres and they are likely to be poor than the men. The culture and law of the land makes it possible that women are poorer and uneducated. In the Northern Nigeria, through the threats of extremists, women are subjugated and instance is the abduction of the Chibok girls. Women are now afraid to go to school and this equally stands against them as they become handicap in using employment to fight poverty which NEEDS has come to reduce.

- Debt burden. Nigeria has browed a lot of money from the international donor agencies and servicing of these debts has really taken a toll on the nation’s economy. Resources that were supposed to be used to expand social services for the benefit of the people as articulated through NEEDS are used in debt servicing and payment. This is a serious problem that needs to be addressed.

- Population explosion. According to reports, the Nigerian population is rapidly growing at a 2.83 percent rate per year. This has made it difficult for the nation to increase it’s per capital income. Resources and programmes that were articulated to benefit a targeted population end up not being able to meet with the ever increasing population. This affects the NEEDS plan towards development.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW NEEDS COULD BE ADEQUATELY POSITIONED FOR SUSTAINED NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

NEEDS as a national policy instituted by government as a sustainable development strategy has in its cardinal objectives the drive to ensure total national and human development in Nigeria but is handicapped due to some impediment. These recommendations are strongly positioned to give life to the strategy and make the programme functional.

- The Government of the nation should ensure that the NEEDS programme should be adequately captured in its budgets. As finance remains the resource to ensure implementation of projects and it should be noted that government has the responsibility to ensure that finance is allocated to programmes which are strategically articulated for the development of the nation.

- Government through its enabling policies should unbundle the economy and create room for local and foreign investors to contribute their wealth towards economic development. No investor or organization should be given any special privilege by government or government unjustly distributing resources to investors. This might boomerang and its consequence tantamount to economic recession.

- Adequate resources should be allocated to securing the nation from internal and external aggression. Today, the problem that has faced the economy and development strategies of the nation is terrorism. The federal government should ensure that enough resource is pushed into this sector to secure the lives and properties of citizens which remains the key player to sustainable economic growth.

- NEEDS through the National Assembly should get the enabling acts of parliament that would make it functioning and functional. Ensure that citizens are educated, informed and mobilized for their support for the programme.

- There should be a monitoring agency that would help in the service delivery of the NEEDS programmes. The notion that government activity must suffer because it is not a personal issues should be eschewed and this agency would take up the responsibility of monitoring that every bit of resource devoted to NEEDS is judiciously and properly managed.

- Nigeria as a nation through its government should fight for debt relief. This has reduced the cash flow and strength of the nation’s currency. Resources are seriously diverted for debt
servicing. Debt relief would ensure more foreign direct investment, strong financial base and create substantial resources inflows which would form part of the financing for the NEEDS programme.

CONCLUSION
It is evident from our result that we cannot reject that in Nigeria today, there is a strong relationship between NEEDS and sustainable development if Nigeria wants to succeed. The import of this developmental strategy is that it brings effectiveness and efficiency to the system, protection of human rights and the all-round development of the nation’s economy. Despite the challenges facing the smooth running of the programme, NEEDS still has a vast pool of potentials and promise for future growth of Nigerian economy. The people’s scepticism about the programme would be surmounted when diligent implementations of its objectives are ensured.
Practically, the recommendation from this study would add to closing the gap about the programme and ensure coordinated sustainable national development.

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