

First National Development Plan and How It Relates to Current Happenings in Nigeria Today

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Abstract

Since the attainment of independence in 1960, Nigeria has launched a number of national development plans and visions in her never-ending quest for the best development approach. The fact that various development strategies and objectives have fallen short of attaining this desired goals is worrisome. The nation is still revelling in the exhilaration of setting goals it has no specific plans to accomplish sixty-three years down the line. The promises that are made in the form of development plans usually fall through even before the change of power, as is typical of all administrations that have held the position of leadership in the nation. The study wishes to examine the relationship between the first National Development Plan to the current happenings in Nigeria taking cognisance of issues such as diversification of the economy beyond reliance on agriculture; Infrastructural Development; Governance and Corruption; Social-economic inequality; Implementation and Execution.

Introduction

Nigeria's successive governments have used development plans as an effective way to deal with the nation's development difficulties in the past. According to (Tordoff 1993 cited in Adegoke, 2018),” development plan works as both a diagnostic and curative tool for development“. In a similar assertion, (Adedeji, 2015) posits that Nigeria's different development plans serve as the finest representation of her economic objectives since independence. Nigeria has been implementing development plans for

the past 63 years in an effort to increase economic growth and raise the standard of living for its citizens. According to Alfred (2018), historically, Nigeria has undergone four national development plans (The First National Development Plan (1962), Second National Development Plan (1970– 1974), Third National Development Plan (1975– 1980), and Fourth National Development Plan (1981– 1985). The fifth National Development Plan did not materialize).

In its never-ending quest for an effective development strategy, the Federal Government had also started three-year rolling plans between 1990 and 1998 and long-term perspective planning. Between 2003 and 2007, the Federal Government launched the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), another ambitious plan (Kalu, 2016). It was a medium-term plan that prioritized value orientation, wealth building, job creation, and poverty alleviation.

In September 2009, Vision 20:2020 was also set up by late President Umaru Yar'Adua's administration amidst fanfare. The goal of the perspective planned Vision 20:2020 was to have a fully developed economy in Nigeria by 2020 (Adegoke, 2018). Despite the fact that Nigeria's administrative system has consistently employed development planning, it is concerning that these plans have not produced the anticipated outcomes.

Just recently, President Muhammadu Buhari launched a new long-term national development plan tagged the Nigeria Agenda 2050 (NA 2050), with the objective of ensuring that the country attains a Per Capita GDP of \$33,328 per annum, placing her among the top middle-income economies in the world by 2050 (Adeshina, 2023).

Ordinarily, this is a welcomed step in the right direction. However, the vision seems blurry when one makes reference to the past experiences Nigerian has had to undergo with successive governments. Today, the nation ranks number one as the poverty capital of the world (World Bank, 2016). At the moment, corruption has shown no signs of abating as it seems to rear its ugly head at the inauguration of any administration, and the nation is currently beset by widespread poverty, crumbling infrastructure, widespread unemployment, high incidences of diseases, an excessive external debt burden, and most recently, massive insecurity in all regions of the nation.

Therefore, the basic thrust of this work is to examine critically the First National Development Plan of 1962, determine the extent to which these development plans and vision were achieved and related it to the current state of affairs in Nigeria.

First National Development Plan Period (1962-1968): An Overview

The post-independence plan phase was sometimes referred to as the First National Development Plan (1962–1968). The key elements of Nigeria's 1962–1968 Plan included "how the government intends to raise the funds as well as recruit the personnel needed to carry out its objectives." According to (Olayiwola & Adeleye, 2005 cited in Abdulaziz, 2019), the plan received a budget allocation of N1,353 million, or 3.7%, of the entire budget. Regarding the creation of rural infrastructure, the strategy was silent. However, 50% of the expenses were expected to be generated from external sources, which could take the form of direct foreign aid to the government or a firm private investment. Transportation received €143.317 (about 21%), electricity €101.74 (about 15%), primary production €91.760 (about 14%), and education €69.763 (about 10%) of the total capital expenditure. Other industries obtained comparatively smaller amounts (Alfred, 2018).

When it came to its contribution to policy-making, the initial plan was not challenging. The plan's macro-objectives included guaranteeing an annual growth rate of at least 4.0%, achieving economic take-off by 1980, creating opportunities in particular sectors like health, education, and employment, increasing access to these opportunities, fostering balanced development, promoting income equity, and fostering macroeconomic stability. Additionally, a clear promise was made to support private businesses, particularly indigenous enterprises (Welsh, 2019).

In any case, the first plan was responsible for the construction of the Kainji Dam and the founding of the Nigerian Industrial Development Bank, which serve as a tangible testament to the institution's achievement in fostering the development of infrastructure (Welsh, 2019). The plan, however, fell short when one takes into account the fact that marketing boards continued to impose tariffs on agricultural export products, which formed an obvious roadblock to the advancement of the peasant farmers who were the main growers and contributors to the development of agriculture (ibid).

The issue was made even worse by the over-valuation of the pound, which led to increased taxation on these exports and had the unintended consequence of drastically reducing the prices of domestic food goods as a result of the entry of relatively cheaper international food items. Due in part to agriculture's high priority status during the relevant time, this scenario was particularly problematic. In actuality, the circumstances amount to nothing less than milking a useful cow to death.

The first development plan was plainly urban-focused in terms of the balance between rural and urban areas (George, 2018). When one considers the fact that the percentage of the expenditure had no appreciable impact, it is clear how true this statement is. (Lipton, 1977 cited in Ndubuisi, 2017) lamented the situation when he noted that the main

current challenge in the underdevelopment of the third world is not between foreign exploiters and the indigenous population or between capital and labour, but rather between rural poverty and powerlessness and urban affluence and power. In keeping with the colonial pattern, this plan substantially rewarded the urban sector at the expense of the rural sector.

As a matter of fact, it is estimated that only about six percent of the first development plan's intended investment in infrastructural facilities went to the rural sector and that nearly 90% went to the urban sector. Even within the field of industrial growth, the initial strategy prioritized giant corporations above small business owners. For instance, the 1964-established Nigerian Industrial Development Bank was restricted from financing unregistered businesses, effectively cutting off most small-scale enterprises from the bank's operations (Okowa, 1982 cited in Mamso, 2019).

The first development plan had some glaring effects on plan implementation, especially with regard to some important projects such as the Kainji Dam, the nation's first oil refinery, and the Nigerian Industrial Development Bank, but the actual plan that was put into action differed greatly from the original programme. For example, actual allocations for agriculture and industry were 9.8 and 8.9 percent, respectively, compared to anticipated allocations of 13.6 and 13.4 (Polask, 2016).

Since agriculture was the main stay of the economy of the nation and still the important driver of foreign exchange at that time, one of the goals of the strategy was to promote the gathering of agricultural products for export (Denis, 2019). However, the major drawbacks of the overall strategy included deficient feasibility studies, poor project evaluation, scant public input, and excessive political interference with economic

decisions. Additionally, the small local content sector received lacklustre attention, and the apparatus for implementing changes in the public sector was poor.

In conclusion, the first development plan failed to carry along the masses. The idea was created by technocrats who were themselves foreigners. In reality, W.F. Stopler and L.M. Hansan, two very skilled planners from the first design, are Americans (Clement, 2018). Even while it is abundantly obvious from the plan itself that the government was aware of the necessity of widespread engagement for plan implementation accomplishment, it took no action to promote Nigerians' involvement in both the development and execution of the plan.

First National Development Plan (NDP) and How it Relates to Current Happenings in Nigeria

Taking a look at Nigeria's situation today, those that have survived from 1962 till date would be filled with nostalgic feelings that capture the true meaning of *deja vu*. Though the First NDP is not directly related to the present day Nigeria but similar issues that happened at that period is still plaguing the nation today. Some of these issues are discussed below.

First, the First NDP stressed on the need to diversify the economy beyond the reliance on agriculture (Anthony, 2019) In a similar manner, Nigeria today is seeking ways to diversify the nation from reliance on oil generated revenue back to other areas like technology, services, manufacturing and even agriculture as the major mainstay of the nation's economy but just like the First NDP, the national has not been able to find its way out of the oil dependence. In fact, there have been investors in the private sector building oil refineries to further drive the oil sector.

Infrastructural development was also a key focal point in the First NDP. The plan emphasized the need for the development of infrastructure like roads, hospital, and power supply, amongst others. Today, Nigeria is still plagued with the same issues. From old pothole-filled roads, to dilapidated hospitals, to poor education, to erratic power supply, the story remains unchanged. These poor infrastructures stands as the major drawbacks most small businesses failed before their fifth anniversary after establishment and also the high mortality rate faced by the nation.

Another issue that is reminiscent of the First NDP is governance and corruption. The First NDP had the problem of getting the right personnel to man the affairs of the nation in terms of resource management and project execution. Nigeria still face the same issues today in terms of finding technocrats that understand the visions of the nation and are ready to implement them. Rather, most people (appointed or elected) see governance as a means of enriching themselves hence the high corruption issues that have grounded the nation.

Social-economic inequality is also an issue that both eras can relate with. The First NDP then sought to close the gap of social inequality. However, it failed in that regards as the government was focused in developing the urban centres, ignoring the rural people. This led to a large influx of people from the hinterlands to major cities. This is replica of what plays out in Nigeria currently. Most projects embarked on by government are mainly elitist's project that has nothing to do with the poor masses. Also, the policies made by government are fashioned in a way it will make the rich richer and the poor poorer.

Finally, like the case of subsequent NDPs that followed the First NDP, the issue of implementation and execution has remained. The First NDP was plagued with the

challenge of executing most of its planned measures. The same can be said of present day Nigeria where government have a line up of beautiful plans and policies that never see the light of the day. This is mostly quelled by official bottlenecks, poor coordination, and other bureaucratic issues that subsist between different levels of government.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, a prerequisite for the translation of initiatives and programmes into concrete results that will meet globally acknowledged and acceptable benchmarks of true development is development planning that concerns processes that ensure that national policies and strategies are achieved and development plans at all levels are fully considered in the overall national development thrusts. However, as lofty as these plans are, most administration find it difficult achieving them due to issues like corruption, paucity of funds due to economic uncertainties or sheer lack of political will. Working on the listed challenges could signal the beginning of a new Nigeria. It is the hope of the author that Nigeria would be ushered into a new dispensation that government would match plans with implementation.

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