
Post Covid-19 Pandemic Nigeria: Implications for Good Governance and Development

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Abstract

Nigeria is going through a perilous time in history as the country is faced with a devastating effect brought about by the deadly spread of COVID-19 pandemic. The measures put in place to curtail the adverse shock of the deadly virus is nothing short of calamitous as they have exposed the Nigerian government inefficiencies. A quantum number of Nigerians had died as a result of police/military brutality, hunger and starvation among other anomalies. The discourse, anchored on structural functional explanatory tool of analysis popularised by Spencer Herbert, Talcott Parsons, among others, stressed on the relationship between the various social institutions and the structures that made up the society. The society, according to the proponents of the theory, is a system with interdependent parts which function together for the stability of the whole. Therefore, to bring about stability and good governance in Nigeria, the Nigerian leaders must strengthen the various institutions and the critical sectors of her economy such as: healthcare, tourism and hospitality, manufacturing and solid minerals. Nigeria must broaden her revenue base, create sufficient buffers and resilience against exogenous shocks. They should address infrastructural decay, institutional weaknesses and endemic corruption bedeviling her since independence.

INTRODUCTION

Since her independence in 1960, Nigeria has experimented with various programmes and policies aimed at massive development of the country. Starting with the first National Development Plan of 1962 to vision 2020, what have we achieved? Yearly, national budgets are presented to the National Assembly for debate and subsequent passage, with billions of naira budgeted for education, health, transport, security, power, roads but the outcomes have been nothing short of calamitous.

Beyond the annual budgets, monies were often borrowed from international financial institutions and nation states to fund infrastructural development projects in the country, in addition to aids and grants received from abroad for same purpose, but to what extent has these helped in the development of the country?

Nigeria has remained in a poor state of development characterized by endemic corruption at all levels of government and society at large. Vast majority of Nigerians continue to live in abject poverty, penury and state of hopelessness, insecurity of lives and properties. Increasing unemployment and youth restiveness, kidnapping and armed robbery, religious extremism and infrastructural deficits, among others have become our lot. (Odo, 2017).

The desired development has become a mirage. In spite of the enormous human and material resources entrapped in Nigeria which should ordinarily serve as catalysts for development of the country, development has remained elusive.

The outbreak of the global pandemic, coronavirus, code named Covid-19 and its entrance into Nigeria on 27th February 2020 when the first confirmed case was recorded, has further exposed the governance failure and infrastructural decay in the country, perhaps in a magnitude that was not imagined. It was disgraceful that as at the time the virus was first recorded in Nigeria,

only a few states in the country had ventilators in their public hospitals, with only two testing centers in the whole country. Even the Aso Rock (Presidential Vila) Clinic didn't have a single ventilator in spite of billions of naira budgeted yearly for the clinic, while most states didn't have good isolation centers.

As a measure to contain the spread of the virus, full lockdown was imposed on the initial epicenters of the virus in the country: Lagos, FCT and Ogun States by the president. Other states governors followed suit and also imposed full lockdown in their various states and week's later interstate lockdown was imposed on the country to contain the spread.

Since the nationwide lockdown started, more Nigerians have died as a result of police/military brutality, much more were killed by the virus. People have also died of hunger, depression and suicide; particularly, the extremely poor Nigerians who depend on what they make daily from the streets for survival. The stimulus packages meant for extremely poor Nigerians were politicized and shared mainly to a section of the country, while the rest of the country was neglected.

There have been sharp fall in the price of oil, due to fall in demand of oil across the globe; this portends serious economic consequences for oil dependent economies like Nigeria. Unemployment rate has skyrocketed and according to the Vice President, Prof. Yemi Osibanjo, over 39 million Nigerians will lose their jobs as a result of the pandemic. Crime rate has increased, also with increases in rape, robbery, ritual killings and banditry attacks. Schools have remained closed with no hope for reopening any time soon due to rising cases of infected people daily, same with churches, business, air operations etc.

The pandemic has affected every aspect of our national life; but more importantly, it has also exposed the institutional weaknesses, infrastructural decay and governance failure of the country. As Nigeria and indeed the rest of the world get prepared to face the new normal lives, what implications do the currents realities facing Nigeria as a result of COVID-19 portends for the country? How do these realities increase the need for good governance and development of the country? This paper attempts to interrogate this issue sector by sector and also proffer solutions on how they can be tackled.

The Origin and Nature of the Disease (COVID-19)

The disease is said to belong to the family of ribonucleic acid (RNA) viruses. The name "Corona Virus" came about because the virus particle exhibits a characteristics of 'corona' (crown) of spike protein around its lipid environment." (See <http://www.oie.int/scientific-expertise/specific-information-and-recommendations/questions-and-answer-on-2019-novel-coronavirus/>). According to the forgoing source of our information, the virus is known to be common in animals and humans. It is equally highly contagious and can be transmitted between animals and humans. The deadly virus is said to cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as acute respiratory syndrome.

It is because of the wide spread and the prevalent nature of the disease across the world that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has come to refer to the COVID-19 event as pandemic. "In December 2019, there were reports of human cases of pneumonia of unknown source witnessed in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. The causative agent of this deadly respiratory diseases of highly contagious nature was identified by Chinese Authority to be "Corona Virus." (see <http://www.oie.int/scientific-expertise/specific-information-and-recommendations/questions-and-answer-on-2019-novel-coronavirus/>). Ever since then, the effected human cases have been reported by almost all countries around the globe. The rate and the speed of the human to human transmission of the disease are quite unprecedented given to other diseases capable of transmission in the recent times.

As at the time of this write-up, there is over 8,306,956 (eight million, three hundred and six thousand, nine hundred and fifty-six) reported cases of COVID-19 and over 404,201 confirmed

deaths. Nigeria alone has over 17,526 (seventeen thousand, five hundred and twenty six) confirmed cases of COVID-19 and over 521 (five hundred and twenty one) death (See covid19.ncdc.gov.ng). What makes the diseases more dangerous is that, at the time of this report, there is no known vaccine or cure for the disease.

There are so many speculations on air as to what constitute a cure for the deadly virus with no tangible proves. It is nothing short of a miracle that a quantum number of persons have recovered but there is no concrete or proven antidotes or cure for the disease, thus the number of infected persons keep soaring by the day.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Good Governance:

Governance is loosely defined as the process and act of governing a people, providing government services to people in a given locality. Hirst and Thompson (1996) define governance as the control of an activity by some means such as a range of desired outcomes is attained. World Bank (1998) conceptualizes governance as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. UNDP (1997) extends the understanding of governance beyond the state to include private sector and civil society, hence we hear of corporate governance and the likes.

But within the domain of our study, governance is focused on how services are provided to the public by public officers. Odo (2017) sees governance therefore as a nation's system of politics and how it functions in relation to public administration and law.

The concept of good governance is even more serious, because "good" is said to be relative. What a society considers as good governance, may not be the same with what another society sees as 'good'. This is based on a number of factors including the stage the given society has attained in her development. But as noted by Eborieme and Egbefo in Ezonbi, Wuan and Jonah eds.(2017), good governance refers to a polity which defines a government, a state or people. It stands for acceptable government and desired leadership. According to Onyeka (2006), good governance entails the elaborate using of available human and material resources for the satisfaction of the need of the society. It follows that there is good governance when the resources of the people are used to meet the people's needs and aspirations. Using what we have to work for us is on itself good governance.

There are some major characteristics of good governance noted by Sheng (2020), they are: participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and it follows the rule of law, assures that corruption is minimized, accommodates the views of the minorities, hears the voices of the most vulnerable in decision making, and finally it is responsive to the present and future needs of the society. When these and more are in place, then there is good governance.

Development:

Development as a concept in social science has generated lots of controversies. It is often used interchangeably with 'growth' and 'change', even when these concepts have different meanings from development. While there is growth in development, growth on its own is not development.

According to Okereke and Ekpe (2010), there are two perspectives to the concept of development; the first is the liberal perspective which is inextricably tied to the economic domain. This perspective sees development as a phenomenon that can be gauged in terms of the growth of the Gross National Products (GNP). They defined it as maximization of the growth of the GNP through capital accumulation and industrialization (Meier, 1999). This view believes that there is development when there is growth in the GNP. The focus is on economic statistics and indices. However, the Marxist/radical perspective differs strongly with the liberal

view; they perceive the view of the liberalists as too abstract and do not keep in touch with the realities on ground. They opine that development is focused on man and his wellbeing and not macro-economic variables, (Okereke and Ekpe, 2010).

This implies that development has to do with general improvement in the wellbeing and living conditions of the people in a given society. There is development when greater majority of the people live in decent homes with electricity, have access to quality education, quality health care and stable means of livelihood among others.

Theoretical Framework

This work is hinged on the theoretical foundation of structural functional theory. This is a sociological theory that explains why the society functions the way it does by emphasizing on the relationship between the various social institutions and structure that makes up the society. The theory assumes that the society is a system with interdependent parts that function together for the stability of the whole. A common analogy popularized by Spencer Herbert presents the parts of the society as organs that work towards for the proper functioning of the body as a whole.

Among the prominent theorists of structural functionalism include: August Comte, Herbert Spencer, Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton and Almond Powell. Almond Powell argued that in order to understand a political system, it is necessary to understand not only its institutions or structures, but also their respective functions; hence, political systems consists of various functions. Describing structural functionalism, Osi (2013), opines that just as the family is made up of the interacting roles of father and mother, husband and wife, brother and sister, so the political system is made up of interacting roles of voters, legislators, administrators etc.

It follows therefore, from the foregoing, that the political system is made up of structures and institutions, which include also the judiciary, legislature, administrators, the police, health, economy, etc. and all these function together for stability and equilibrium of the system, state. The society is said to be stable and healthy only when the structures and institutions are functioning very well. We can also go ahead to add that it also means, there is good governance and development in a society only when these institutions and structures are functioning very well as intended.

The State of Nigeria Health Sector

It is important to begin with the health sector as this is the first institution the global pandemic hit the most in the country.

Due to the priority attached to health, In April 2001, the African Union countries met and pledged to set a target of allocating at least 15% of their annual budget to improve the health sector and urged donor countries to scale up support. Years later, only one African country reached this target (WHO, 2020). However, in Nigeria, budgeted spending on health has been on the decrease, sometimes fallen between 5-6 % of the annual budget.

Nigeria health sector is one of the poorest in the world in spite of the huge sum allocated to it yearly. In 2015, Health Sector allocation was N257, 543bn or 5.8 percent of the budget. In 2016, 2017 and 2018, health sector budget allocation was in the sum of N347,26bn which is 4.15 percent, N353,54bn which represents 4.15 percent and 340.456bn representing 3.95 percent. The 2019 health budget was N365.77 billion which stands for 4.1 percent of the total budget (Budget Office, 2020). This huge sum has not improved our health sector as medical tourism continues to surge. According to the Health Minister, Dr Osagie Ehanire, Nigeria losses \$1b yearly to medical tourism (Punch, 2016), this is due to the poor state of the nation's health sector. On the average, majority of Nigeria politicians do not patronize the health services of the country. They are on an unending medical trip abroad always, the consequence being that they don't have firsthand knowledge of the poor state of the nation's health sector.

When the wife of the President, Aisha Buhari visited the State House Clinic in 2017, she was surprised at the poor state of the clinic. According to her, she recently fell ill and was advised to travel to London for treatment, but she refused. "I called the Aso Clinic to find out if they have an X-Ray machine; they said it's not working, in the end I had to go to a hospital owned and operated by foreigners 100 per cent. There is a budget for the Hospital and if you go there now, you will see a number of constructions going on but they don't have a single syringe there. What is the purpose of the buildings if there is no equipment there to work with?" (PremiumTimes, 2017).

Earlier, the President's daughter had lashed at the permanent secretary of the state house for the poor state of the clinic. She asked, "Why isn't there simple Paracetamol, gloves, syringes... Why do patients/staff have to buy what they need in the state house clinic?" (The Cable, 2017). It is important to know that analysis of budgetary allocations between 2015 and 2020 showed that N3.94 billion, N3.87 billion, N331.70 million and N1.03 billion, N823.44 million and N723 were allocated in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 respectively for the operations of the State House Medical Centre. Despite spending these huge amounts on the state house clinic, it was unfit to treat the late Chief of State to the President, Mallam Abba Kyari who died as a result of COVID-19 complications. (Sahara reporters, 2019 and Sundiatapost, 2020). When the late Chief of Staff tested positive to the virus, there was no single ventilator in Aso Rock clinic, hence one of the two ventilators in Gwagwalada Hospital was moved to the State house clinic for his treatment. (Daily Post, 2020).

This picture we see in the Aso Rock Clinic is a pure reflection of the state of government hospitals in the whole country. Following the Covid19 global imposed lockdown, most of the politicians cannot travel abroad again for their usual medical check up thus resulting to an increase in death of high profile Nigerians.

As at the time of this research, less than 100,000 Nigerians have been tested negative to COVID19, this is due to the very poor state of our health sector. Testing kits are lacking in majority of the public hospitals and testing centres in the country, the result being that the rate of infections has been on the increase. South Africa has carried out 1,148,933 COVID 19 samples test, with 73,533 positive cases, 39,867 recoveries and 1568 deaths. (See corona virus, 2020) while Nigeria has carried out 96,402 tests, with 16,658 positive cases, 5349 recoveries and 424 deaths as at 15th June, 2020, (NCDC, 2020).

Police Brutality and Extortions During The COVID19 Lockdown:

It is known that Nigeria security architecture is weak, with endemic corruption and human right abuses, but this has increased with the COVID19 imposed lockdown. In enforcing the COVID19, especially within the first weeks after it was imposed, there were high level of police brutality which resulted to the death of over 18 Nigerians as at the time coronavirus had killed barely 12 people with 402 confirmed positive cases (Daily Mail, 2020). This disregard for human lives and abuse by the police generated public outcry and condemnation from within and outside Nigeria.

As a means of containing the virus, interstate lockdown was imposed on the nation by the President during his third covid19 nationwide address on 27th April, and the security agencies were expected to enforce the President's directive, but instead of the directive to stop interstate travels of non-essential workers and goods, interstate travels have continued unstoppable; as far as you are ready to 'settle' the police, you will be allowed to pass, not minding the state you're travelling from and those you're carrying.

An investigation carried out by Premium Times Reporters as published by All Africa (2020) showed that travelers first hint of the free-for-all extortion on the roads was the astronomical hike in fares. In some routes, passengers were charged up to 160 per cent more than the usual fare. A trip from Jibowu to Onitsha and other parts of the South East that usually cost between

N6,000 and N7,000 now cost travelers between N15,000 and N18,000. A trip from Lagos to Uyo which usually cost between N7,000 and N8,000 now cost at least N20,000.

"Oga, shaybi you will be in the car as we go, you will see how much we will give to police before we get to Onitsha", said the driver of a Toyota Sienna minivan conveying one of our reporters when questioned about the hike in the fare.

The driver said he spends about N50,000 bribing policemen, soldiers and other security operatives before he gets to Onitsha. The reporter thought he was making things up to justify the hike in the fare. But things turned out to be worse than the driver had narrated.

Extortion Bazaar to Owerri

The journey from Jibowu Terminal to the Sagamu Bypass on the Sagamu -Benin Expressway was uneventful as there were no police checkpoints at the Berger boundary between Lagos and Ogun. But as soon as the minivan passed the Sagamu bypass, the extortion bazaar began.

Almost all security outfits in the country - the police, the military, the Nigerian Vigilante Group, the Federal Road Safety Corps, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps and even officials of states' COVID-19 taskforces and employees of the construction company, RCC, participated in the free-for-all shakedown of mainly commercial motorists flouting the presidential order.

The Premium Times reporter counted 58 checkpoints from the Sagamu bypass to the Delta State end of the Niger Bridge. Despite the proliferation of checkpoints on the road, all the drivers of the minivan he was travelling in and other commercial vehicles did to pass through was to pay at least a bribe of N500 at each checkpoint.

Though many of the checkpoints were just a few metres apart, the heaviest clusters of checkpoints on the route were at state boundaries. Here, the bribe is usually doubled to N1000 at each checkpoint before they were allowed through.

At the boundary between Ogun and Ondo State on the Sagamu- Benin Expressway, there was a cluster of about 10 checkpoints made up of officials of the FRSC, different units of the Nigeria Police, military personnel, and officials of the COVID-19 taskforces of both states and a checkpoint manned by employees of the road construction firm, RCC.

Close to Okada in Edo State, the driver of the minivan who had become increasingly cranky after spending a good chunk of his earned fare on bribing security personnel tried to evade a checkpoint manned by operatives of the police highway patrol units, he was pursued and intercepted at a checkpoint less than 300 metres away manned by operatives of the same team whose blockade he had tried to breach seconds ago. The driver was handcuffed to the police van and the commuters driven back to the original checkpoint by a policeman.

One of the operatives threatened to shoot the driver on the spot adding that nothing will happen if he did.

"I will shoot you and say I did it because you tried to kill us with your car," he said calmly.

He then demanded that the driver of the minivan buys enough fuel to fill up the tank of the unit's van. After negotiation for about an hour, the policemen settled for a N5,000 bribe before allowing the minivan and passengers through.

Just before we entered Benin City, the capital city of Edo State, commuters were asked to alight from their vehicle and were screened by health workers with a temperature gun for fever and asked if they have had a fever or have been coughing before being allowed to continue with their trips.

At Isiele Ukwu in Delta State, a team of Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) of the police apprehended the minivan and threaten to charge every occupant before the state's COVID-19 mobile court for flouting the ban on interstate travel.

The policemen later demanded a bribe of N15,000 to let the passengers and minivan go. After about 40 minutes of negotiation, they reduced it to N5,000. At this time, the bus driver had

become 'fully-blown' irritated and said he was not going to pay the bribe from the fare: his passengers had to raise N5,000 among themselves to pay off the policemen.

At the Delta State end of the Niger Bridge, the traffic of vehicle into Anambra State extended to about three kilometres. At this point, the driver of the minivan, who had been following a police motorcade driving against the traffic, refused to continue the trip to Owerri, our original destination.

Passengers either had to walk about 6 kilometres to the Niger Bridge or take commercial motorcycle at N700 to the Anambra end of the bridge before walking around a yellow and black spiked gate the state government had erected in a futile effort to stop persons from crossing into the state. The police and military checkpoints at the head of the bridge did nothing to stop pedestrians walking into the state.

The reporter had to take a bus from the foot of the Upper Iwaka flyover bridge at Onitsha to continue his journey into Owerri. He paid N3,000 to be conveyed him Owerri instead of the usual fare of between N600 and N1,000.

At the boundary between Anambra and Imo State, the police operatives manning a gate erected by the Imo State Government refused to let anyone through because it was past 8 p.m., which was the start of the curfew.

COVID-19 and Nigeria Economy

The global pandemic is heavily hitting the economies of nations of the world. For most of the developing economies like Nigeria, which is still sluggishly grappling with recovery from the 2016 economic recession which was as a result of the fall out of global oil price and insufficient foreign exchange earnings to meet imports, it is not going to be an easy one. In the spirit of economic recovery and growth sustainability, the Nigerian federal budget for the 2020 fiscal year was prepared with significant revenue expectations but with contestable realizations. The approved budget had projected revenue collections at N8.24 Trillion, an increase of about 20% from 2019 figure. The revenue assumptions are premised on increased global oil demand and stable market with oil price benchmark and oil output respectively at \$57 per barrel and 2.18 Million Barrels Per Day. (Akanni and Gabriel 2020)

The emergence of COVID-19 and its increasing incidence in Nigeria has called for drastic review and changes in the earlier revenue expectations and fiscal projections. Compared to events that led to recession in 2016, the current state of the global economy poses more difficulties ahead as the oil price is currently below US\$30 with projections that it will drop further going by the price war among key players in the industry. Unfortunately, the nation has grossly underachieved in setting aside sufficient buffers for rainy days such as it faces in the coming days. In addressing these daunting economic challenges, the current considerations to revise the budget downward became inevitable. However, certain considerations that are expected in the review must not be left out. The assumptions and benchmarks must be based on realizable thresholds and estimates to ensure optimum budget performance, especially on the non-oil revenue components. (Akanni and Gabriel, 2020)

Furthermore, cutting expenditures must be done such that the already excluded group and vulnerable are not left to bear the brunt of the economic contraction. The economic and growth recovery program which has the aim of increasing social inclusion by creating jobs and providing support for the poorest and most vulnerable members of society through investments in social programs and providing social amenities will no doubt suffers some setbacks. Besides, the downward review of the budget and contractions in public spending could be devastating on poverty and unemployment. The last unemployment report released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) ranks Nigeria 21st among 181 countries with an unemployment rate of about 23.1%. According to the panel report submitted to the President by the Vice President, Prof. Yemi Osibanjo, 39.4 million Nigerians may lose their jobs as a result of COVID-19 (Guardian,

2020). The country has also been rated as the poverty capital of the world with an estimated 91.8 million people living on less than \$2 a day threshold (WEF, 2020).

The outbreak of the pandemic and the containment measures to mitigate the spread led to the close-down of businesses. More than half of the populations that constitute the labour force in Nigeria are massively in the informal sector of the economy. The containment measures and the strict restrictions on movement have a direct negative implication for those that eke out living from informal sector. This situation is equally escalated or worsens by the disruption in the supply chain from China.

Decline in the Financial Flows (Remittance)

COVID-19 containment measures equally have adverse consequences in the financial flows and these financial flows take the form of remittance. Remittance flows, contribute substantially to economy growth and household income. The majority of people that left the country for a greener pastures, do occasionally send money to their relatives at home to ease off their financial constraints and for them to engage in a meaningful small scale businesses and investments; thereby, contributing to Nigerian economy but the laying off of workers and the closing down of businesses abroad have affected remittance tremendously.

Majority of Nigerians in the rural areas depend solely on subsistence farming. The 2020 off season harvests should be reaching markets and providing substantial incomes to stall holders and farmers but the restrictions in movement within Nigeria and the cross border as well as market closure will deny these farmers access to the Nigerian markets to buy seeds and fertilizers for the planting season (see <http://www.google.com/url?q=https://unctad.org/en/PublicationLibrary/ditcinf2020d1.pdf&sa=U&ved=>)

Impact of COVID-19 on Education Sector

The Federal Ministry of Education announced a temporary closure of schools in the country from March 23rd, in a bid to contain the spread of the coronavirus. But considering the state of Nigeria's education sector, do public schools in Nigeria have the technology to cater for the millions of students affected by the closure of schools? Do households have the facilities required to engage their children in virtual learning? Do teachers have the resources to deliver live lessons or record a massive open online course (MOOC) styled lessons? Hussain, (2020) asks.

Temporary school closures come with high social and economic cost with a more severe impact on children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

A [UNICEF report](#) states that 10.5 million of the country's children aged 5-14 years are not in school. One in every five out of school children in the world is in Nigeria. Only 61% of 6 to 11-year-olds regularly attend primary school. Some states in the north east and north west of the country have more than half of the girls not enrolled in schools as marginalization ensures that girls are deprived of basic education.(UNICEF, 2020)

A struggle was going on prior to COVID-19 to ensure young children stay in school and have access to proper education, as [Nigeria contributes approximately 20%](#) of the total global out-of-school population. (Amorighoye, 2020), but this fight has negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The fact remains that COVID-19 pandemic is revolutionizing digital and online education from what it used to be to a normal globally but children and students in rural communities in

Nigeria, are being left behind as they are not equipped to adapt or transit to the new methods of learning electronically.

On 19 March 2020, the Federal Ministry of Education approved school closures as a response to the pandemic. States in the federation contextualized this, with the Lagos State Ministry of Education and other states ministries of education releasing a schedule of radio and TV lessons for students in public schools. Majority of the poor Nigerians living in rural areas cannot afford a television set to enable them connect their children to the electronics learning.

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) embarked on indefinite strike on 23rd March, and members were directed not to be a part of any e-learning being introduced by various schools management in line with the industrial action. Over 3 months after the Union embarked on the strike, government is yet to come to a consensus with them so that the strike can be called off and the possibility for the e-learning to be conveniently explored

Internet access in the country is still very poor, while most parts of the rural areas of the country don't have internet accessibility. Where there is internet network, electricity challenge poses yet another problem. Nigeria is still battling with electricity challenge as the country currently generates less than 5000 megawatts of electricity for a population of about 200 million people.

Recommendations:

It is unfortunate that Nigeria was never prepared for the global pandemic that came upon the world even after many years of government spending on key sectors of the economy, including health, education and security. This is due to endemic corruption and mismanagement. The resultant effect is that some high profile Nigerians has paid with their lives what they failed to do with the public fund at their disposal.

Governance must assume serious dimension with focus on boosting the health infrastructures of the country. There should be increased governmental spending on health, with greater increase in accountability and transparency in order to ensure that every kobo spend on health is properly utilized and accounted for. State governments should also prioritize health care services; life after all, is wealth. World class medical centers should be built to reduce medical tourism and also keep the nation prepared for unforeseen health emergencies that may rise at any time, such as we have now.

Police reform is long overdue if we must curb the excesses and brutality of men of uniform. Government should ensure that every extra judicial killing and brutality by the military, police and other security agencies is properly investigated and culprits brought to book without fear or favour. Corruption in the security agencies, particularly, the police is something that has become endemic, but this is because political backed up with guts has not been applied in curtailing it. Government appeared helpless and it bemoans the porosity of interstate borders due to police corruption, but no officer has been dismissed because of it. Political will alone is not enough, political guts must follow. Officers Indicted of corruption and bribery must be adequately prosecuted.

As we face the new normal, internet access must be enhanced. Many rural communities with no internet connection should be prioritized by the internet service providers. People should also embrace technology and use it to their advantage instead of condemning it. 4g network is good but 5g will be better. Most features of the massive internet including e-medicine, enhanced e-learning, smart government etc. can only be supported with internet network higher than 5g.

School teachers and lecturers should move from analog teaching to digital teaching by going through the requisite training that will make them ICT savvy.

Electricity provision should be enhanced. It is only regrettable that a nation of 200 million people like Nigeria cannot boast of 5000mw of electricity supply. E- Learning is only possible when there is electricity supply. Phones, laptops, televisions and other electronic gadgets used for e-learning require electricity to be powered. Compliancy to social distancing and stay at home is possible when there is electricity at home to keep the people entertained.

Government should come up with serious programme that is devoid of ethnic and religious biases to tackle poverty in the country

Basically, the Nigerian government must essentially lead economic diversification drive. It is one practicable way to saddle through the current economic uncertainties and instabilities occasioned by global pandemic. What the consequences of COVID-19 pandemic should further offer the Nigerian economic managers and policymakers is that the one-tracked, monolithic reliance on oil is failing. Diversification priorities to alternative sectors such as agriculture, solid minerals, manufacturing and services sectors should be further intensified, this time with greater commitment, focus and determination.

Government should contemplate giving tax exemptions and holiday to sectors that are badly affected by the pandemic. These sectors should include: health care, tourism and manufacturing sectors. The Nigeria government should provide income support thereby, reducing the tendencies for firm and consumers to borrow. Government money transfer should be made to most vulnerable to enable them scale through this horrible moment and this should be done in a very clear and transparent manner.

Conclusion

Nigeria has everything required to move up in the ladder of development but what is lacking is transformational leadership and strong institutions that will use the resources of the people for the good of the greater majority of the people.

Nigeria has come of age, after 60 years of independence; we have no excellent excuse for our failure to develop. Leadership must be deliberate with the provision of good governance for the people. Good hospitals, good road networks, improved electricity supply, professional policing among others will benefit not just the poor masses, but the rich few, including the politicians than are custodian of public trust. There is no separate Nigeria for the elite and another for the poor, at least COVID-19 has revealed. Since the global lockdown started, elite Nigerians have not been able to travel out of the country for medical tourism as before and most of them have died as a result, since there are no world class hospitals in the country to manage their health challenges. This is a time development of the country must be taken very personal by those in leadership as they will also benefit from it like the rest of the people. Accountability and transparency must be the watchword as days of reckoning are coming. The time for action is now.

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