THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT

The Critical Role of Data in Nigeria's Development: An Assessment

Dr. Godwin Ntuk Udeh

Chairman, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Institution: University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria Bassey, Nelson Akpan

Lecturer, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

Abstract:

Development engineering is a strategic interest for many economies in view of its potential to deliver resources for national development. It requires critical real time data to craft and deliver a development plan. This paper was conceived as a response to the near circle struggle of Nigeria with non-availability of basic data for delivery of public programmes. The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, the lockdown that followed in March 2020 and, the need to deliver material assistance to the poorest of the poor across Nigeria, brought to the fore the need to have reliable database of citizens in Nigeria. Real names and residents of persons became very useful in contacts tracing, but these were lacking. It was equally discovered that many Nigerians falsify record just like the government to have advantage. Nonetheless, the work noted that change is possible. The Government was encouraged to conduct census which was due since 2016, because census data is the nucleus of development planning. Directors of BPRS at the 774 Local Government Areas in Nigeria were prompted to reactivate one of their core mandates, namely, information gathering from the communities. The channel of data flow from local governments to the NBS was seen as a crucial screening process than a curse.

Keywords: Nigeria, COVID-19, development, data, planning, population, sustainable development

1. Introduction

79

Man has moved progressively from the stone age to modern civilization. In the cause of that progression, they have been mistakes, frustrations, lessons and breakthroughs. One key component of man's progression has been the role of science. Science is organized and systematic body of knowledge aimed at verifiable explanations and predictions about the universe. Science makes use of observations, facts, figures, data and statistics. These variables are the core building blocks of science and development. In other words, societal development hinges on the premium placed on the building blocks of science.

Nations that are developed today had long realized the importance and indispensability of scientific data to development. Development itself entails all the modern advances in science and technology, in democracy and social organization fused into the single humanitarian project of deliberately and cooperatively producing a better world for all (Peet and Hartwick, 2009). Development is not heavenly or magical, it is deliberately planned and executed on earth by man. But it needs critical inputs such as facts, figures, statistics or broadly speaking data. Remember that in elementary economics, we answer these questions: What to produce? How to produce? And for whom? These questions are important today as they were when they were first asked. Answers to these questions require real time data.

Development planning must utilize raw data. Demography of the state i.e., total population, gender distribution, age distribution, labour force etc. Nigeria clearly have issues in this regard. For instance, census which supposed to be conducted every ten years was last conducted by President Olusegun Obasanjo in 2006. Nigeria was due for census in 2016. To date in 2020, Nigeria is still waiting for census that should have been conducted in 2016. Without valid census figures, where does planning begin? Population and housing census provide information for development planners: schools needed and where, housing needs, hospital needs, water needs, employment needs, available skills etc.

On the flip side, Ajakaiye (2015:142) raises doubt on even the limited data that may be available in Nigeria noting, 'in an environment characterized by corrupt practices, data generated by statutory bodies are unlikely to be reliable even if the requisite skills are present in the relevant institutions. The integrity of administrative data from the MDAs may be contaminated by the perceived or real implications for budgetary allocations. The result is that the expectation that accurate and comprehensive administrative data will flow regularly from MDAs remains unfulfilled'.

Nonetheless, the outbreak of Novel Corona Virus Pandemic (COVID-19) in China in the twilight of 2019, but, has now spread to nearly all nations, took the world by surprise. It has exposed Nigeria's nakedness once more. Actually, no nation seems to have been fully prepared for it. It has ravaged the world in ways that the world may not have seen before.

Between December, 2019- November, 2020 nearly 1.3 million lives have been lost globally by COVID-19 and counting. True, Pfizer and BioNTechhas announced a vaccine candidate with over 90% success in preventing contracting virus but is not yet available for use. In the interim, terminologies that are not entirely new, but have dramatically clustered around COVID-19 include social distancing, facemask, self-isolation, quarantine, lockdown, contacts tracing, respiratory hygiene, poorest of the poor, palliatives, social register etc. This disease has shown the importance of having real-time data by countries. Information on number of residents per area, valid addresses, available hospital bed space, the employed and unemployed, food banks, most vulnerable etc., have become essential commodities.

This study is prompted by the frantic search for real time data to address emerging challenges in Nigeria. One such urgent issue is the seeming cloud over the Nigeria Social Insurance Programme (SIP). Recall that Nigeria National Assembly had raised alarm over the Nigeria Social Register used by the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development (MHADMSD) to give support to the so called poorest of the poor. Minister of MHADMSD, HajiaSadiyaFarouq, explained unsuccessfully how her ministry distributed palliatives to 3.6 million households in the so called National Social Register approved by President Buhari in April, 2020.

1.1. Data Sources

There are many data sources available to government for purposes of formulating policies, strategies and programmes aimed at promoting national development. These include general administrative data, census and housing surveys, household surveys, agricultural surveys, civic registration, banking biometric registration, economic statistics and geo-spatial data. These sources are explained here:

1.1.1. Population and Housing Census

This involves systematic gathering and recording of demographic and housing information from the total population (Odhiambo and Umar, 2019). It is usually conducted every ten years. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2017), data from census are used for many important applications including, allocating political power, distribution of federal funds through funding formulas, civil rights enforcement, business applications, post-census population estimates and projections, providing weights for sample surveys, providing denominators for rates, infrastructure distribution, community planning, and economic and scientific research. Nigeria last conducted census in 2006. It showed Nigeria population had hit the 140 million mark. The last 14 years, Nigeria is working on projections.

1.1.2. Household Survey

This is designed to provide information on demographic and socioeconomic statistics from a randomly selected sample of the total population. Household surveys can also be limited to specific geographic areas. Sano, Tada and Yamamoto (2015: 506) notes that household survey furnishes information about income, consumption and savings, which are the key determinant factors of the economic welfare. Especially, individual data on households is a powerful tool to analyze an asymmetry between households such as an index of income disparity. Inaddition to household income and expenditure, the unemployment rate is gleaned from asurvey of labor force and the level of human capital in a country is measured from statisticson educational status.

1.1.3. Agricultural Surveys

Agricultural surveys provide data on agricultural production systems and practices based on a random sample of the population. Agricultural surveys or census of agriculture provides structural data on agriculture, with the key data collected in the core module, and more detailed items collected in the sample-based supplementary module (WPCA, 2010). Surveys on food consumption, income and expenditure, rural labour force, and household food security provide important agriculture-related data. Data collected assist authorities to plan and determine what is required to promote food sufficiency. Hunger cannot be isolated or quarantine. Therefore, agricultural data is vital to produce enough food for man and animal.

1.1.4. General Administrative Data

80

This has to do with information collected primarily for administrative or management purposes including health records, tax, educational records, welfare, etc.

1.1.5. Civic Registration and Vital Statistics

Here, we refer to administrative data that records vital events in a person's life including birth, marriage, separation, divorce, adoption, and death. This is one of the most abused data in Nigeria. Most Nigerians have either falsified age or distorted age. One Professor at the University of Uyo nearly got dismissed because of different age declaration in his documents in 2007. The Vice Chancellor at the time Professor AkanerenEssien queried him for submitting different ages in his documents. Also, introduction of Bank Verification Number (BVN) opened up how fraught civil registration is in Nigeria. But first, the Central Bank of Nigeria on February14, 2014 made it compulsory that all account holders should have a bank verification number to enable the account holder to have a single identity in all the banks in Nigeria. Multiple account holders would be covered with a single registration in any of the banks where they have accounts, all he or she needs to do is to link it with his or her accounts. This system helps banks in the protection of their customers from theft and other financial/economic crimes growing in the financial system (Akyuz, TonyandOpusunju, 2015). The fallout was that most multiple account holders were unable to access their various account because of differences in mostly date of birth supplied during opening of these accounts. In the months that followed February, 2014,

most Customer Care Department of commercial banks were filled with customers seeking to rectify date of birth anomalies. In an ideal system, should basic information such as birth date be controversial? No. Birth registration is one of the responsibilities of government. Such record must be a priority to government. The NPC has that responsibility.

But why do people falsify their date of birth? They manipulate date of birth to qualify for what they are not otherwise qualified. For instance, many falsify date of birth to:

- Gain admission into age-based schools such the Nigeria Defense Academy (NDA)
- Qualify for National Youth Service Scheme (NYSC) whose age limit is 30 years.
- Qualify for employment
- Stay within marriageable bracket (mostly females)
- Stay at work longer than 35 years or 60 years of age, whichever comes first
- Feel a sense of youth etc.

Age falsification is not new in Nigeria. Adebayo (1989: 180) captured this trend noting:

There is another allied cause of deterioration of efficiency in the Nigerian public service. It is the chronic habit of false declaration of age by some public officers. When the tell-tale grey hairs of old age threaten to expose them, they resort to dying their hair, not only on the head, but also the eyebrows and the mustache. Whatever efforts such officials might make to deceive the world, the truth is that no one can cheat nature.

Those who falsify age to continue at work risk falling into the trap of being too old to work, yet too young to retire. Nigeria must find the way around this bleak situation.

1.1.6. Geospatial Data

Geospatial data refers to any environmental and socioeconomic data that include location-specific information. Integrating geospatial data with household surveys can enable disaggregation and analysis by spatial characteristics, for example, proximity to roads or levels of urban development. Geospatial data is critical in disaster response and management such as flood, tsunami, earthquake and fire outbreak. In Nigeria, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and its States counterparts rely on geospatial data for rescue operations during disaster.

1.2. The Picture in Nigeria

Development as a concept is devoid of universality in meaning. Part of the challenge to a universal meaning is that the concept has broad appeal in nearly all aspects of life. In other words, development is a hybrid term for a myriad of strategies adopted for socio-economic, political and environmental transformation from current states to desired levels. Often, development is used interchangeably with economic growth, measured solely in terms of annual increases in precapita income or gross national product (GNP), regardless of its distribution and the degree of people's participation in effective growth. As noted by Abuiyada, (2018: 115) adapted from Pearson (1992), development involves 'an improvement qualitative, quantitative or both - in the use of available resources.'Development is not haphazard or a chance evolution in the progress of society. Rather, development as noted by Bassey (2019: 24),'is a strategic mobilization of ingenuity or creative ideals matched with skills to transform human activities'. He further notes that 'there is no book of development, but development is a product of sacrifice and perseverance that challenges otherwise unchallenged ingenuity to meet human needs written in great minds.'

Nigeria's development hinges partly on availability of reliable data. So far, lots of contests have trailed available data in Nigeria. Recall that barely two years after independence, Nigeria conducted census in 1962/63. The first count in 1962 was rejected by the Northern Region and canceled by the Prime Minister, TafawaBalewa. But why? The census figures not released officially, brought the South at per with the North in terms of population as follows:

Region	1952	1962	1963
North	174 seats	22.5m	29.8m
South West	143 seats	23.6m	10.3m
South East			12.4m
Mid-West			2.5m
Lagos, then (FCT)			0.7m
Total	312 seats	46.1m	55.7m

Table 1: Census Figures

The second count ordered by the Prime Minister produced magical figures in the North as shown in Table 1. The figures released by the Federal Government was accepted by the Northern and Western regions but rejected by Eastern and Mid-Western regions on grounds of inflation and gross irregularities which they were unable to prove in court (Eminue, 2006). Also, the 2006 census figures were rejected by many Governors of Southern states chiefly, Senator Bola Tinubu of Lagos state. Lagos went ahead to conduct its own census which was never recognized by the Federal Government.

Besides census, many election victories have been overturned in courts. In Edo state, Adams Oshiomhole, got his mandate in court. Same was the case with RotimiAmaechi of Rivers states. Hope Uzodima and DouyeDiri of Imo and Bayelsa states respectively got their mandates in courts. These represent a pinch of mandates retrieved in courts. But they tell a story of easy in easy out. Unfortunately, INEC officials and the Returning Officers who usually supervise elections are never called to account. Udeh and Bassey (2018: 1092) vividly captured the situation in Nigeria stating:

In some cases, announcement of results preceded conclusion of collation of results. Winning elections without electorate is a rape on democracy and human sensibility. It means the electoral body predicts how the electorate would have voted and magically release results accordingly. What a miracle!

Of course, rigging election is not and cannot be the handiwork of one man. Many hands are usually involved and they are all guilty. If anyone wonders why a discussion on the value of reliable data to national development devotes time for election issues, he should remember that elections, especially a general election, is the single most important activity of citizens. Apart from that, election requires lots of data for planning and delivery. A nation without reliable data base can hardly organize credible polls. That is why nearly all our election results are tested in courts.

1.3. Structure of Data Generation in Nigeria

Nigeria operates a federal form of government. This implies that the powers and responsibilities of government are shared between a Federal, States and Local governments. Each of these levels of government have assigned roles and responsibilities guaranteed by the constitution. Whereas some responsibilities are exclusive to a level of government, (for instance, the federal government alone maintains a military force, police, currency etc.) some responsibilities are shared, (such as agriculture, education, infrastructure, data generation, health etc.) which require a joint mandate. Data collection, collation, analysis and evaluation, storage, retrieval, update is under the shared responsibility of governments.

At the federal level, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) is the primary agency saddled with provision of timely data for the nation served for those exclusively assigned to the National Population Commission (NPC). NBS primarily is a warehouse of data. It is a warehouse because it receives data from respective federal MDAs and maintains such for those who need such data. MDAs themselves also receive data from States' MDAs. States' MDAs also receive data from Local Departments. As illustrated in fig.1.1, national development requires a network of relations between agencies of government at all levels. It shows that the National Bureau of Statistics and National Population Commission are the primary warehouses of timely data for national development.

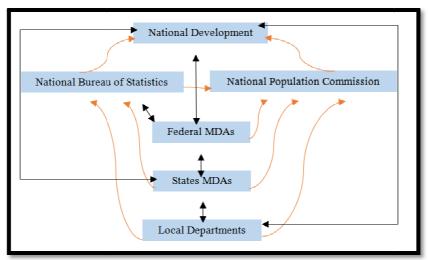


Figure 1: Intertwined Relationship between Mdas& National Development

If this structure is understood and followed, it will be easier to track and verify authenticity of available data in Nigeria.

One question this will quickly through up is, who should custody the so-called National Register? The Minister of humanitarian affairs, disaster management and social development was unable to produce before the Nigerian Senate, the register of the poorest of the poor allegedly used by her office to give Conditional Cash Transfer to the most vulnerable households in Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) is not original to the Buhari Government in Nigeria. It was actually lunched by the Obasanjo administration in 2007 across 12 of Nigeria's 36 federated states (Akinola, 2016). It was designed with the objectives of reducing socio-economic vulnerabilities and breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty by developing human capital. It requires selected households to ensure that their children attend school and participate in immunization programmes as conditions for receiving the benefits. As noted by Mekah (2018), the programme focuses on registration of poor and vulnerable households in the National Social Registry (NSR), enrollment in the Conditional Cash Transfer, Household Uplifting Program (HUP), and payments of cash transfers. The NSR continues to expand and to date from 2.6 million households to 3.6 million households (David, 2020) covering 35 of 36 states and 11,045,537 individuals as shown in appendix 1.

Make no mistake, what the Senate requested was not block figures, but the details, the building blocks of the 11,045,537 individuals. The point is, given the structure of data generation in Nigeria federal system, it would have been difficult for the National Social Safety Nets Coordinating Office (NASSCO) to unilaterally generate the data of the poorest of the poor in Nigeria without the involvement of the States and Council areas. The Senate was right to verify if their constituents were captured in the register. It was intriguing as Minister of MHADMSD,HajiaSadiyaFarouq claimed the register was in the office of Accountant General of the Federation (AGF). And few days after her appearance in the Senate,

a section of the AGF office was razed by fire. You see why Ajakaiye (2015:142) raised doubt on available data in Nigeria noting, 'in an environment characterized by corrupt practices, data generated by statutory bodies are unlikely to be reliable'. The same argument was raised by NtukUdeh in an interview with The Ink (2020: 9) noting:

The Nigerian economy is still suffering from nonalignment because we do not know our asset and liabilities. We do not know how many we really are and therefore cannot plan effectively. We belong to a country afraid of data collection. If we have realistic data, many will not win elections. But because for now our electoral process is anchored on rigging and falsification of figures many politicians are flying high. That is why a state like Borno with the highest number of displaced persons in Nigeria due to the Boko Haram insurgency chunked out bogus votes (836,496) in the 2019 presidential elections.

One can see that the data availability and use in Nigeria is still at infant stages. Nigeria must utilize real time data to plan for her people.

1.4. Value of Data in Nigeria

A structured government ensures its sustainable policies and programmes on empirically processed real time data. Statistical data represents the anchor and foundation for functional and effective policies whose implementation facilitate the attainment of desired socio-economic and/or socio-political goals. In Nigeria unfortunately, fanfare policy statements are made by politicians before tasking the public service to generate data and framework to execute them. The point is, data is life.

The United Nations Organization views statistics as the pathfinder for solution as well as a veritable tool in assessing the extent or level of national development of an economy in a given period. The national economic policies and complex interactions among various sectors of an economy makes it imperative for building up microeconomic and macroeconomic planning models. These kinds of model's build-up are only possible with statistical information (which is also used in estimating the parameters of the model) to monitor the performance of the economy and the social well-being of the people. The following basic statistics according to Shangodoyin (2011: 132) is required in economic policy formulation:

- Macroeconomic aggregates (GDP, GNP, Capital Formation, External transactions, input/output coefficients, etc.).
- Consumption data (Government and Private)
- Investment Expenditure (Government and Private)
- Import and Exports
- Prices and Inflation Rates
- Industrial Production and Indices
- Energy and Power Production/ Consumption
- Agricultural and Raw Material Production
- Transportation and Communication Indicators
- Government Services
- Housing and Finance
- Interest Rates and Exchange Rates
- Banking and Finance

In formulating social policy of state, the following statistics is critical:

- Health Indicators
- Telephone penetration
- Population Characteristics
- Sanitation and Water Supply Indicators
- Cultural and Immigration Flows
- Religion and Human Rights Indicators
- Public Order Indicators

Nigeria needs all the outlined data and perhaps more for proper planning to achieve national development. Data collection requires planning. In fact, proper planning is perhaps the most crucial phase of data management. Of course, quality of data must be very high ensuring a minimization of both the sampling error (if a sample approach has been used for data collection) and non-sampling error. National development depends on the timeliness and accuracy of data. Data processing has since moved beyond the mere coding, editing, sorting, computing and final publication of data collected by either MDAs or the NBS. There is also the critical issue of data storage and retrieval, together with the deletion of unwanted material and its replacement in revised form or updated data.

That is why those who follow the NBS will notice near frequent changes based on update figures, facts and statistics. The entire gamut of activities from collection, collation, analysis, storage, retrieval, update is referred to as data management.

2. Conclusion

Every house stands on a foundation. A house's foundation determines largely the strength of the house and its longevity. Similarly, national development requires proper planning. Yet, no planning can be effective without real-time data. Data on how many people live in an area and their ages; educational qualification and skills; employed and unemployed graduates/ school leavers; social amenities available; income levels and consumption pattern etc. At the moment Nigeria is suffering from dearth of data. This may be deliberately orchestrated by the government to avoid

accountability and perpetuate vested interests. The structure of Nigeria as per federalism should be a blessing than a curse. Data flow from the Local Councils through the State MDAs to the federal MDAs and the NBS, should ensure proper scrutiny and refinement.

Yes, COVID-19 has reinforced the need to have up to date data base of Nigerians and residents in Nigeria. At the time nations were looking to how best to response to the pandemic, Nigeria was confronted with a rather given issue of social register for administration of palliatives to the most vulnerable once. Has any lesson been learnt? We hope so but moving forward:

- The Buhari Administration must conduct population census. It is difficult to continue working with projections based on the figures of 2006 census.
- The NPC must take active and sustained interest in birth registration. It seems date of birth is not a private information because the arrival of a baby is usually a public and joyous occasion.
- Directors of Budget, Planning, Research and Statistics (BPRS) at the 774 Local Governments are encouraged to seat up. They are to activate one of their core mandates of information gathering from the communities.
- Government should criminalize and fine anyone who changes his date of birth. Birth and death records are national information. Any alteration should be met with sanctions.

3. References

- i. Adebayo, A. (1989). Principles and Practice of Public Administration in Nigeria. Spectrum books Limited, Ibadan, 180p.
- ii. Abuiyada, R. (2018). Traditional Development Theories have failed to Address the Needs of the majority of People at Grassroots Levels with Reference to GAD. International Journal of Business and Social Science, 9(9):
- iii. Ajakaiye, O. (2015). Enhancing Data Generation for National Development in Nigeria: Institutional and Structural. CBN Journal of Applied Statistics, 3(1): 139-149.
- iv. Akinola, O. (2016). Rethinking the design and implementation of Nigeria's COPE Conditional Cash Transfer Programme. The International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, 330p.
- v. Akyuz, M., Tony, L. W. and Opusunju, M. I. (2015). Impact of bank verification number (BVN) on corrupt business practices in United bank for Africa in Abuja, 1(6): 39-52.
- vi. Bassey, N. A. (2019). Natural Resource Governance and Sustainable Development in the Niger Delta. PhD thesis, University of Uyo, Nigeria, 24p.
- vii. David, R. (2020). Nigeria: Palliatives Social Register Expanded From 2.6 to 3.6 Million Households in Two Weeks, The Vanguard, https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/04/social-register-to-be-expanded-from-2-6-to-3-6-million-households-in-2-wks/.
- viii. Eminue, O. (2006). Military in Politics. Soulmate Press and Publishers, Uyo, 171p.
- ix. Mekah, A. (2018), NIGERIA: National Social Safety Nets Project (NASSP) Implementation Support Mission. The Public Discourse, 1p.
- x. Odhiambo, O. and Umar, F. (2019). Harnessing Big Data for Sustainable Development in Nigeria. Journal of Sustainable Development, 12 (3): 146-158.
- xi. Peet, R. and Hartwick, E. (2009). Theories of development. Contentions, argument, alternatives. Guilford Press, New York, 324p.
- xii. Sano, S., Tada, S. and Yamamoto, M. (2015). Method of Household Surveys and Characteristics of Surveyed Households: Comparison regarding Household Composition, Annual Income and Educational Attainment. Public Policy Review, 11(4): 505-529.
- xiii. Shangodoyin, K. (2011). The Role of Statistics in National Development with Reference to Botswana and Nigeria Statistical Systems. Journal of Sustainable Development, 4(3): 131-135.
- xiv. The INK (2020). Federal Government should Open the National Food Reserve to Treat COVID-19 Hunger. www.http://.theinknewspaper.blogspot.com. Retrieved June 1st, 2020.
- xv. Udeh, G. N. and Bassey, N. A. (2018). Democracy is freed, but has popular sovereignty served its jail term in Nigeria? 8(12): International Journal of Asian Social Science, 1088-1096.
- xvi. U.S. Census Bureau. (2014a). (BILL UPDATE). The 2013 population estimates are available online at http://factfinder2.Census.gov/services/jsf/pages/productview.xhtmlbkmk.

Vol 8Issue 12 DOI No.: 10.24940/theijbm/2020/v8/i12/BM2012-019 December, 2020

Appendix

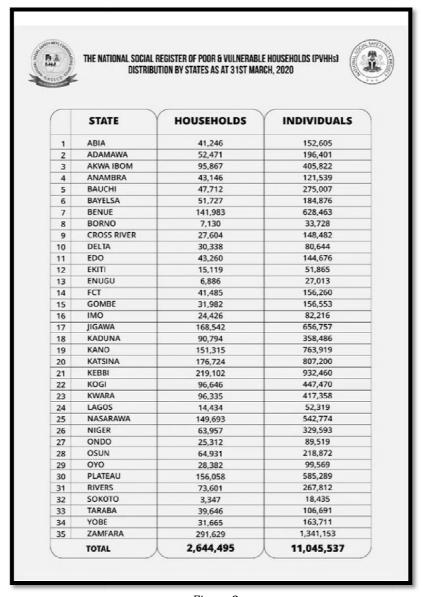


Figure 2