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## Development of State Business Agenda (SBA) for Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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### Abstract:

*The Nigeria Socio-economic and Business landscape has continued to be challenged from all fronts by a series of factors militating against the creation and growth of the business. These factors affect the capacity of the business sector to contribute (as partners in progress), to the socio-economic development of the States, by limiting their employment capability and income-generating ability. Like many of the States in the North Central Zone of Nigeria, the Nasarawa State business community is confronted with a lot of problems affecting its growth and development. Though multi-faceted and varied, five problems or issues have been prioritized and have been identified. This includes:*

- *Multiple Taxation and Business Growth,*
- *High Rate of Unemployment, Poverty and Business Environment,*
- *Poor Sanitation and Waste Management System,*
- *Weak Capital Base, Lack of Land Titles, and*
- *Insecurity of Lives/Properties*

*The methodology used is an evidence-based approach. The instrument used for analysis is a simple percentage method and ANOVA. The researcher finds that all five key elements significantly impact the growth of businesses in the state.*

**Keywords:** *Development, management, business, unemployment*

### 1. Background to the Study

The Nigerian socio-economic and business landscape has continued to be challenged from all fronts by various factors militating against the creation and grants of business. These factors affect the capacity of the business sector to contribute (as partners in progress), to the socio-economic development of the States, by limiting their employment capability and income guaranty ability.

Like many of the States in the North Central Zone of Nigeria, the Nasarawa State business community is confronted with many problems affecting its growth and development. Though multi-faceted and varied, five problems or issues have been prioritized and have been identified as top on the list deserving urgent attention.

The Nasarawa Coalition of Business & Professional Associations (NACOBPA) members at the State Business Agenda development workshop on the 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> August, 2015, held in Lafia, identified five key issues of concern to the entire business community in Nasarawa State. These issues were variously and independently discussed by different working groups, identifying the key stakeholders, determining goals, ascertaining their effects, and mapping out strategies for addressing these issues.

The Five (5) identified and prioritized issues are:

- Multiple Taxation of Business
- High Rate of Unemployment, Poverty, and Social Vices
- Poor Sanitation and Waste Management
- Weak Capital base and Lack of Land Titles
- Insecurity of Lives/Properties and Robbery attacks

The purpose of this study is to:

- Carry out an evidenced-based investigation into the problems affecting and militating against the growth of business in Nasarawa State and their capacity to create employment and wealth and
- Provide a platform to engage governments and other stakeholders through advocacy campaigns to address the identified problems

#### 1.1. The Statement of the Problem

The five (5) key issues that have been selected by the Coalition members and variously/independently subjected to discussion by the Non-NACOBPA business community members, working groups, the researcher, and other Stakeholders include the following:

- Multiple Taxation of Business
- High Rate of Unemployment, Poverty, and Social Vices
- Poor Sanitation and Waste Management
- Weak Capital base and Lack of Land Titles
- Insecurity of Lives/Properties and Robbery attacks

These issues, which formed the bases for the field survey, focused group discussions, Interviews, and Stakeholders' interactions, are here under-explained briefly in the context of the Nasarawa State and its business environment.

### 1.2. Objectives of the Study

- To ascertain the impact of the identified problems on the growth of business in Nasarawa State.
- To proffer a workable, action-oriented plan and implementation action plan, reforms, and commendation for addressing the problems.
- To formulate a policy brief to engage stakeholders and the government.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. History of the State

The area, which is today known as Nasarawa State, was formerly a geopolitical unit under the Benue and Plateau Provinces of Northern Nigeria. With the clamour for creating more states in the country, Nasarawa State was eventually carved out of Plateau State by General Sani Abacha-led military government on October 1, 1996.

The State is structured into thirteen (13) Local Government Areas (LGAs) namely: Akwanga, Awe, Doma, Karu, Keana, Keffi, Kokona, LAFia, Nasarawa, NasarawaEggon, Obi, Toto and Wamba. In addition, the State Government created sixteen (16) *Development Areas* and is awaiting listing by the National Assembly as LGAs, in the appropriate schedule to the 1999 Constitution (John Benneth, 2016).

Nasarawa State is located in the middle belt zone of the country and has a climate typical of the tropical zone. The 1991 census put the State's population at 1.2 million. The State's population by 2006 is estimated at over 2 million. The State comprises over 30 ethnic groups, each with its distinct cultural heritage, living in harmony with one another. Among the tribes are the Alago, Eggon, Gbagyi, Gwandara, Egbura, Migili, Kantana, Rindre, Fulani, Hausa, Kanuri, Tiv, Afo, Gade, Nyankpa, Koro, Jukun, Mada, Ninzam, Nakere, Basa, Agatu, Arum, Kulere, Ibo, Yoruba, etc. People from other parts of the country coexist peacefully with the indigenes.

Major sources of funds available to Nasarawa State include:

- Statutory Allocation from Federation Account,
- Value Added Tax (VAT),
- The Internally Generated Revenue (IGR),
- Loan draw down or borrowing (both local and external), and
- Grants from donor agencies and International Organisations

The State also has vast, arable lands for commercial farming, fishery development, wildlife, forestry conservation, and tourism. Therefore, agriculture is the mainstay of the state's economy, with over 80% of the population involved in subsistence farming.

#### 2.1.1. Issue 1: Multiple Taxation of Businesses

Taxes are compulsory levies imposed by the Laws on all legitimate incomes/revenues generated or earned by individuals or businesses in a given jurisdiction. These payments by business operators are mandatory and are used by the government for its developmental programmes and projects. Good as these taxes may look, their ascertainment, calculation, collection, and administration must be friendly, simple, transparent, and less cumbersome. The ambiguity and multiplicity of tax collecting agencies or organs are common in the State. Also of concern is the need to streamline or harmonize all taxes paid by the business operators and designate when such taxes should be paid for accountability and transparency (Mark J. Kohler, 2018; and Tom Wheelwright, 2018).

This issue shall continuously address the advocacy campaign on harmonization and simplifications of all taxes paid by business operators and promote passage of legislation of this.

#### 2.1.2. Issue 2: High Rate of Unemployment, Poverty, and Social Vices

The rate of unemployment in the State is very high, as well as the poverty index (17-20%). Both of these have equally heightened the indices of social vices across the State with the attendant effects on business and standard of living. The key stakeholders to partner in the drive to address this problem are – the state government, the State House of Assembly, Traders Association, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), Micro Finance Institutions, and State Traditional Council. Messages to these stakeholders shall vary, but the expected outcome from the advocacies is abundantly clear – to provide employment opportunities and improve the standard of living (Augustine N. Gbosi, 2005; and Eric C. N. Okam, 2006).

### 2.1.3. Issue 3: Poor Sanitation and Waste Management

The State Capital and its major towns/cities where business activities are carried out have remained unattractive for business and prospective investors. The management and control of the solid and liquid wastes by public agencies is very substandard, with the streets and business premises littered with garbage and dirt. This situation negatively affects investments, causes injurious health, and causes a loss of revenue to the government. Major stakeholders identified include:

- Ministry of Environment, the Media Organizations,
- Security Agencies – (Police, Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC),) and
- Waste Management Companies

The expected outcome of the advocacy is to enlighten the public and the government on the need for a clean environment for an enhanced standard of living, efficient business operation, and increased revenue generation for the government.

### 2.1.4. Issue 4: Weak Capital Base and Lack of Land Titles

The business operates and grows better and quickly if they have a strong capital base. Also, the possession of land titles (C of O) by businesses facilitates access to finance and growth. However, the challenge in Nasarawa State is that while many businesses remain weak due to capital inadequacy, they equally do not have title documents/deeds. Where procedures for obtaining titles exist, the cost is exceptionally high, and the procedure is cumbersome. The stakeholders to partner in the assignment include:

- The State House of Assembly,
- Nasarawa Geographical Information System (NAGIS),
- Ministry of Justice,
- Nasarawa State Council of Traditional Rulers and
- Nasarawa Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA)

The aim is to ensure better planning and coordination of land matters, timely issuance of title documents, reduction of land disputes and litigations, and enhanced revenue generation for the government (Adefi M. D. Olong, 2011).

### 2.1.5. Issue 5: Insecurity of Lives/Properties

The wave of insecurity in the State has continued to be high generally. The incessant attacks by bandits/robbers on business premises and people have continued to increase. Such incidences are affecting the business climate negatively:

- The death of businessmen,
- The loss of properties/valuables,
- The disincentive to investors,
- The relocation or exit of some business outfits to other locations, etc
- The identified stakeholders to partner in the advocacy plan include:
- The Nasarawa state government,
- The Traditional Rulers' Council,
- Trade Associations,
- The Media Organizations,
- Nasarawa State House of Assembly Committees on Security, and
- The Nigeria Police Force (State Command)

The advocacy aims to create a safe business environment through effective community policing, using community watch groups in synergy with the legislators and the Nigeria Police Force, and thus promoting business growth, the state's development, and revenue generation for the government.

## *2.2. Research Design*

The overall goal of the work is to carry out an evidence-based study that will provide reliable data, facts, and statistics for developing a State Business Agenda (SBA) for Nasarawa State (Liampultong, P, 2010).

The study used the survey method, which entails designing and administering a structured questionnaire to capture and address the five major issues or problems affecting and militating against the growth of business in Nasarawa State (Shammah Y, 2016).

## *2.3. Theoretical Review*

Game theory is a branch of applied mathematics that provides tools for analyzing situations in which parties, called players, make interdependent decisions. This interdependence causes each player to consider other players' possible decisions or strategies. The researcher adopted the theory because it understands the choice among competing players. Game theory can also help players make optimal decisions when confronted by independent and competing actors in a strategic setting. The two most common types of game theories are cooperative game theory and non-cooperative game theory. The collaborative game theory discusses how groups or coalitions interact or behave when the payoffs are known.

### 3. Presentation of Data and Discussion of Results/Findings

#### 3.1. Data Presentation and Analysis

This section focuses essentially on the presentation and analysis of data collected from the field on some identified/prioritized key issues affecting the establishment, growth, and development of businesses in Nasarawa state.

Structured questionnaires were administered to a sample of 440 respondents in four selected towns in four selected local government areas in Nasarawa state. The local government areas were Lafia, Keffi, Maraba and Eggon/Akwanga. The number of questionnaires administered in each selected town is as follows:

- Lafia (130), Keffi (85),
- Maraba/Masaka (106) and
- Eggon/Akwanga (119)

However, 120 questionnaires were retrieved from Lafia, 82 questionnaires were retrieved from Keffi, 102 questionnaires were retrieved from Maraba/Masaka, and 116 questionnaires were retrieved from Eggon/Akwanga. The retrieved questionnaires totaled 420, thus representing a 95% retrieval rate. Percentage and other simple statistical tools were used to analyse the data collated.

Business Issues	Locations	No. of Respondents	Survey Instrument Used			Status of Respondents
			Questionnaire	Interviews	NACOBPA	
1. Effects of Multiple Taxation on Business Growth	Lafia	130	100	30	90	40
2. Unemployment, Poverty & Social Vices	Eggon/Akwanga	120	100	20	90	30
3. Poor Sanitation and Waste Management						
4. Finance and Land Titles	Keffi	85	75	10	65	20
5. Insecurity and Robbery	Maraba/Masaka	105	85	20	80	25
Total		440			325	115

Table 1  
SBA Survey Data

The collation and analysis of survey data/questions and the interpretations of output were done through the technique of Simple percentages, Averages, and explanations. The findings were presented in tables with charts (where appropriate).

Develop an Economic Impact Report (EIR) on the five (5) key prioritized issues. This shall indicate the effects of the issues on Revenue/Income and the well-being of society.

Provide the framework for NACOBPA members to develop issue-based recommendations for policymakers and talking points (briefs) on both issues and recommendations.

Submission of Final Report to TETFUND, including all samples of final products, work plan, experience/lessons learnt, and recommendations.

The above captures the methodology adopted for the evidence-based research and the series of interrelated activities that facilitated the production of the evidence-based SBA Report, with its accompanying policy recommendations.

Certain challenges were envisaged and indeed encountered in the conduct of the study. These include:

- Apathy from the respondents,
- Inability to provide accurate data/answers,
- Communication/language limitations and
- Bureaucratic bottlenecks in some organisations

The researcher, however, endeavoured to mitigate the effects of these obvious limitations through adequate training of field/data collectors, engagement of local interpreters/communicators (where necessary), and persistently lobbying the bureaucrats.

Prioritized Issues	Current Legal And Regulatory Policies/Laws	Major Stakeholders Mapping	Economic Impact/Effect of Cost/Revenues	Comparisons And Lessons From Other States	
<u>Issue 1:</u>	Business premises permits	Nasarawa state government	Reduced/low business revenue	Legislation on harmonization of existing edicts/laws on taxes/levies and revenue agencies, e.g., Lagos state	
	Produce/commodities taxes	Local government councils	Disincentive to investors	Harmonization of all the numerous forms of rates, levies, and taxes into affordable and convenient numbers, e.g., Kogi state	
	Personal income tax	State board internal revenue	Hampers business expansion	Partnership with international organisations for the review, harmonization, and sensitization of stakeholders, e.g., Kogi gems 3 project	
	Market fees/dues	Ministry of finance, commerce, and industry	Causes industrial conflicts	Strategic re-orientation and training for	
	Task force on revenue collection.	Business associations, e.g., nassi, naccima	Relocation of businesses	Tax officers	
		Member house of assembly	Revenue loss to the government		
<u>Issue 2:</u> unemployment, poverty, and the business environment	No any existing legislation or policy directives for economic empowerment of poor citizens, e.g., Micro credit scheme	Nasarawa state government	Poor patronage and loss of turnover	Creation of well-served industrial layouts	
		Nasarawa state house of assembly	Low profitability of operations.	Establishment of business clusters/zones to boost private sector job creation capacity	
		Ministry of youth development, commerce, and industry	Loss of revenue to government through business taxes.	Establishment of industrial/business development fund.	
		National directorate of employment	Increase in crimes/criminality	Creating entrepreneurship development centres	
		SMEDAN	Incessant attacks on business premises or business travelers	Development and operations of social protection fund (spf)	
		Trade associations			
		Financial institutions and banks			
<u>Issue 3:</u> poor sanitation and waste management system	Existing legislation on the establishment of sanitation and waste management board.	Nasarawa state and local government areas	Poor sales revenue at markets	Restructuring and empowerment of waste management agencies (legislation and training)	
		Absence of legislation on enforcement and punishment of offenders.	Waste and sanitation management board and organisations	Health dangers, e.g., cholera, lassa fever, etc.	Increased budgetary expenditure for waste management and control activities
		Morasuation policies in Lgas	Ministry of lands and environments	Loss of revenue to government through levies and taxes	Adoption of the PPP approach for waste management
			Nigeria police force	Increase the cost of health care facilities to the government	Civil populace re-orientation and enlightenment, e.g., Lagos and Ogun state
			Traditional council		
	Media organisations				

Prioritized Issues	Current legal and Regulatory Policies/Laws	Major Stakeholders Mapping	Economic Impact/Effect of Cost/Revenues	Comparisons and Lessons from Other States
<u>Issue 4:</u> lack of land title and stunt business growth	Existing national legislation on land use act/deed	Nasarawa state geographical info. System	Lack or poor access to finance for business growth and expansion.	Reduced cost of processing/obtaining c of ose.g. ₦30, 000 ₦50, 000 ₦100, 000, etc. in Ondo state
	No formal legislation or legal policy document on land title acquisition	Ministry of land and environment	Absence of collateral to secure fresh funding or additional finance	Reduced time for processing of c of os to 30 – 40 days, e.g., Ogun state.
	Lgas and traditional councils issue the right of occupancy (r of o) in their jurisdiction.	Town planning bound	It stunts the existing business	Simplification of the documentary procedure.
		Nasarawa state house of assembly	Loss of tax revenues to the government	
		Ministry of Justice	Increase youth unemployment due to the low job creation capacity of a business.	
		Naccima Traditional rulers council		
<u>Issue 5:</u> insecurity and robbery attacks on business.	Existing criminal and penal code/laws on theft/robbery	Nasarawa state and local government areas	Hinder business growth and expansion	Created enabling environment through infrastructural provision for businesses
	Local policing or vigilante system in various lgas	Nigeria police force	Loss of profit and assets	Partnering with private
	Police – community relations committees exist in the state.	Traditional council	Loss of government revenue from business	Sector companies to provide business security.
		Nasarawa state house of assembly	Discourage prospective investors.	Strategic capacity-building training for all cadre of security agencies
		Trade groups and business associations Religion associations State assembly committee on security Media organizations.	Disincentives to existing business Promotes business relocation	Adopted a PPP approach for funding equipment, tools, and logistic support for security

Table 2

### 3.2. Data Presentation and Analyses on Five Key Prioritized Issues

#### 3.2.1. Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions were held, and the participating members include:

- Manufacturers Association of Nigeria,
- National Association of Women Entrepreneurs,
- Market Women and Men Association,
- National Association of Patent Medicine Dealers (NASSI), and
- Hospitality and Catering Association

The responses to the issues raised are presented in table 3.

<b>On the issue of taxation</b> , it was generally opined that it should be regularized. Multiple taxation is a disincentive to business. No clear-cut definition of taxes affects compliance and exposes a business to fraud by tax collectors.
<b>On the issue of employment</b> , it was generally agreed that the rate of unemployment in the state is high. It also affects business people because profit is shared among dependents, who are mostly unemployed. Therefore, as a matter of urgency, deliberate policies that favour small business development should be pursued.
<b>On the sanitation conditions</b> , everyone is affected. However, Nigerians do not generally keep to instructions; more enlightenment campaigns can drive home the message. The metropolis in the urban centers has improved in sanitary conditions, but more needs to be done in the suburbs.
<b>The process is very slow on the issuance of 'C of Os'</b> . Most businesses prefer to look for other funding sources, as getting C of Os is currently very expensive. The government, in its part, is not encouraging businesses to get it, which could have been a viable source of revenue. Some members said they have applied for over six years and had given up on the process itself.
<b>On insecurity</b> , members opined that if unemployment is not tackled, insecurity will remain on the rise. Though the townships are safer now than before, the suburbs and roads to rural areas are high target points. Also, establishing grazing lands would reduce the incidences of Fulani/host community face-offs.

Table 3: Focus Group Responses

Source: Field Survey, 2018

#### 4. Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Policy Recommendations

##### 4.1. Summary of Major Findings

The study's key findings arising from the field survey data collected, focus group discussion and interviews include the following:

- That multiple taxes or taxation significantly affects their business, which is a serious disincentive.
- That the poverty status and unemployment situation in Nasarawa state practically affects their businesses through low sales patronage (occasioned by low purchasing power) and consequently hindering business expansion and growth.
- That state of sanitation and waste management system in Nasarawa state is not very good. The many effects of poor sanitary conditions are evidenced in the widespread diseases/health dangers affecting business patronage and income.
- Most business owners have no land titles, while many have never applied for a certificate of occupancy before. However, the study discovered that in the state, the processing of land title document (which facilitate quick access to finance) take several months or even a year to obtain. This invariably limits access to ready and affordable small and medium loan facilities by a business owner.
- The effect of insecurity and robbery on business is not too pronounced in Nasarawa State, and its effect has not significantly affected business in the state. While insecurity generally discourages prospective investors, the incidence of insecurity is more in the form of communal clashes and cattle rearers and farmers' conflicts in the state.

##### 4.2. Conclusions

The business has the characteristics of being involved in the transfer or exchange of goods and services, as well as human activity directed towards acquiring wealth, which will lead to growth by increasing the national income. The essence of this survey is to identify and prioritize key issues adversely affecting the establishment, growth, and development of businesses in Nasarawa state. 440 structured questionnaires were administered to sampled business owners in five selected towns in five selected local government areas in Nasarawa state (the local government areas) and towns of Lafia, Keffi, Karu (Maraba/Masaka), Nasarawa-Eggon, and Akwanga. Out of 440 structured questionnaires, a total of 420 questionnaires were retrieved.

To understand the effects of multiple taxations on business growth and the environment, the first attempt was made to know the number of employees that are employed in the business operated by the respondents. It reveals that 43.34% of business operatives have 3-5 employees, and business premises tax is the tax paid by most business organisations. The mode of payment of taxes shows that 39.52% of respondents pay cash yearly. When respondents were asked whether their business was subjected to payment of multiple or duplicated taxes, 42% responded by saying yes. 35.24% of the responses indicated Local Government Council was responsible for collecting taxes in their areas, and 29.05% of the responses suggested the State Board of Internal Revenue (SBIR), followed by the State/LGA Revenue Task Force (25.00%).

Nevertheless, 10.71% of the responses show that other agencies are involved in collecting taxes in the respondents' areas. A total of 53.81% of the respondents are of the view that multiple taxes affect their businesses significantly/very significantly. Invariably, it is a disincentive to business. In rating the conduct of tax collection officials in their areas of operation, 32.86% and 28.57% of respondents perceived that they were unfriendly and hostile, respectively. However, a large percentage of respondents (53.09%) think that the performance of the State or LGA revenue agencies is

fair but that multiple taxes should be regulated and controlled. Others recommended that the number of revenue collection agencies should be reduced.

Concerning the issue of a high rate of unemployment, poverty, social vices, and business environment, 38.57% of respondents perceive that the twin problems (unemployment and poverty) are fairly high in Nasarawa state. The majority of respondents agreed with the suggestion that the economic condition of the State practically affects their businesses as a result of low patronage or sales in their business. The respondents were of the perception that these twin problems have brought about, among others, low output and an increase in poverty. This has resulted in a security threat as the state's crime rate is now high. To curb these issues, a reasonable percentage of the respondents agreed with the recommendation of providing technical and financial credit to private sector businesses. Also, a large proportion of respondents (50.00%) said they would support legislation to encourage and/or mandate the government and its agencies to support the poor/unemployed and provide financial credit to business operators to create more jobs and improve living standards. These policy interventions and measures will bring about at least a 10% reduction in the unemployment figures (i.e., from 20-10%), ultimately boosting the economy's state by at least 5%.

On the subject of sanitation and waste management system, about 34.52% of respondents observed that it is fair. On the other hand, 15.48% of respondents reported that sanitation and waste control practice is not good in the State and that it has adversely affected their businesses, as stated by 55.00% of respondents. One of the adverse effects is exposure to diseases/health dangers, as reported by 33.10% of respondents. Top among the proposal for effective sanitation and waste management system in the State was that government should increase expenditure by at least 20%, next is that Public-Private Partnership (PPP) should be encouraged, followed by a personal sanitation system and waste management. An overwhelming percentage of respondents (56.67%) definitely said yes that they would support the empowerment of the waste management agencies through legislation, financing, and capacity building for proper enforcement of the sanitation rules and regulations.

On the subject 'Stunted Business Growth due to Lack of Land Title Documents (Certificate of Occupancy)', investigation reveals that a large proportion (64.76%) responded that they do not have Land Title Documents for their business premises. Most respondents (61.90%) specified that they have never previously requested Land Title Documents for their business premises from a government agency. In an attempt to investigate if respondents have been granted title documents and the duration of the processing, data revealed that 60.00% of the respondents replied in negative and said that it takes months/years. 44.52% of respondents reported that they never had banks to make a request for 'C of O' before granting loan facilities, while 30.24% of respondents indicated 'yes, often'. From the responses, 40.47% of respondents were of the view that possession of 'C of O' document will not enhance their capital-based and business expansion. Concerning problems encountered in processing land title documents, the responses of the respondents suggest that delay is a major problem in the processing. Among the reasons cited for the delays are problems with documentation and legal issues. A reasonable percentage of respondents (31.43%) were of the view that the cost of obtaining 'C of C' is high and difficult, and the procedures are the same in the State.

Regarding insecurity and incessant robbery attacks on business operators, 41.43% of respondents viewed the attacks on business premises/operators as very high in Nasarawa state. 56.76% of respondents reported that the spate of insecurity/robbery attacks had no adverse effect on their businesses. 45.24% of respondents, on the other hand, claimed that the spate of insecurity/robbery attacks has negatively affected their businesses. Interestingly over 60 percent of respondents indicated that their businesses have never been victims of the spate of insecurity/robbery attacks in the State. 36.43% of respondents agree that these attacks on businesses tend to discourage investors and encourage an exodus of operators from the state. The same proportion of respondents strongly agreed with this statement. A reasonable percentage of respondents were of the opinion that the security agencies were 'not ready' in terms of addressing this menace -structurally, financially, and equipment/ammunition readiness. Clearly, the combination of strong support and support responses indicates that 64.29% of respondents are calling for a review of existing laws and procedures. This is overwhelming when compared to the proportion of respondents who do not support or are undecided on this issue (total percentage of 35.71%).

#### *4.3. Policy Recommendations*

Based on the findings from the issues raised above, this study recommends that:

##### 4.3.1. Issue 1: Multiple Taxation and Business Growth

The Nasarawa State Board of Internal Revenue (SBIR) should be upgraded and transformed into a 'State Internal Revenue Service' (SIRS) with full autonomous status as practised in some other states like: Lagos, Ogun, Rivers, Kaduna, etc. This will enhance the performance and revenue-generating ability of the agency and position it for technical and/or capacity-building support from development/donor partners like: Department for International Development/GEMS3 Project, among others.

Tax collection should be defined with respect to which government agencies should collect certain taxes. This will avoid the different agencies of the government collecting taxes from the same particular organization. Similarly, harmonizing and publishing a list of approved or authorized taxes and government agents will help educate the public.

Also, unauthorised agencies should be restrained from collecting business taxes or levies outside the harmonized list. A joint effort of authorized agencies may be required.

In addition, the government should implement a policy to avoid illegal taxes, such as community levy, boys or youth levy, and association or union levy.



Other criminal elements that may form themselves into revenue agencies and start collecting taxes from individuals and businessmen should be reported to relevant government agencies for sanction.

These specific actions will boost the state's current internally generated revenue (IGR), which currently averages ₦400 million monthly to about ₦700 – ₦800 million (over 100% increase). This is practically possible given a large number of businesses currently outside the tax nets/brackets, the wide apathy to payment of taxes, and the unfriendly attitude of revenue agencies.

#### 4.3.2. Issue 2: High Rate of Unemployment, Poverty, and Business Environment

The government should create an enabling environment for establishing more industries to broaden employment opportunities for the teeming unemployed youths in the State.

Improving infrastructural development such as the constant supply of electricity, good water supply, good roads, and basic facilities will encourage industrial development and reduce business costs.

The various market place and business premises in the major town of Lafia, Keffi, Akwanga, Karu, and Nasarawa need basic facilities like water supply, electricity, and accessible roads, to facilitate business growth.

Government should facilitate the establishment/creation of industrial layout in the 3 senatorial districts of the state to attract investors and the establishment of industries by prospective private sector businessmen, e.g., at Lafia, Keffi, Akwanga, Karu.

The government should facilitate legislation to encourage public agencies and other financial institutions to support the financial empowerment of the unemployed and vulnerable groups in the state to boost job creation. The creation of a Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) development fund is recommended to boost the creation of 3,000 jobs per year (an average of 250 jobs per local government area per year). The fund shall be administered by a joint committee consisting of the government and business community representatives.

Design a good policy framework for effectively managing a State Revolving Micro Credit Scheme in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to ensure proper loan utilization, monitoring, and recovery. A tripartite loan management arrangement comprising the Government, the Bank, and Business Community representatives is recommended.

A policy directive to contractors and contracting firms compelling them to source 20 – 30% of their workforce from the host community should be implemented.

On the part of the business operators, they should be more innovative in job creation to absorb the teeming number of unemployed youths in the communities they operate in order to develop a sense of belonging and a conducive business environment.

These policy interventions and measures will bring about at least a 10% reduction in the unemployment figures (i.e., from 20-10%), ultimately boosting the economy's state by at least 5%.

#### 4.3.3. Issue 3: Sanitation and Waste Management System

It is a notable fact that waste management practices are not uniform among countries, regions, and sectors. However, this study recommends that the Polluter Pays Principle should be introduced whereby the polluting party pays for the impact caused to the environment, i.e., the waste generator is to pay for appropriate disposal of the unrecoverable material.

In the same vein, providing sanitation to people requires a systems approach, rather than only focusing on treatment and proper disposal of sewage or wastewater alone.

The Ministry of Environment (MOE) should be empowered financially with adequate budgetary releases for the procurement of necessary equipment, tools, and vehicles, as well as the engagement of the requisite manpower for the execution of its core mandate in sanitation and waste control and environmental management.

As it concerns the business environment, government and the business community should enforce an environmental sanitation system with the main objective of protecting and promoting human health by providing a clean environment and breaking the disease cycle. This will entail regular, interval, or periodic environmental sanitation and punishment of offenders.

The earlier environmental sanitation suggested should be accompanied by community-led total sanitation to achieve behaviour change in mainly rural people by the process of 'triggering', leading to spontaneous and long-term abandonment of open defecation practices.

#### 4.3.4. Issue 4: Lack of Land Titles and Stunt Business Growth

The remedy to Stunted Business Growth is to ensure that Land Title Documents are processed on time and as promised. The government agency or department handling this document must be reorganized (through capacity building/training and provision of needed tools/materials) and the necessary units created to facilitate processing.

The steps required to obtain this document should be reduced to avoid so much back and forth movement between multiple government agencies or departments.

The cost of procuring a survey plan (a necessary requirement to obtain a land title) from registered surveyors (Surveyors Registration Council - SURCOL), which currently stands as #120,000 per plot or #225,000 per hectare is prohibitively high for the state and should be reduced.

(Source: Ministry lands Nasarawa state)

The procedure for obtaining land title documents and the processing time should have been streamlined and shortened to about 30-45 days at the maximum. Also, the governor's consent/assent to all processed title documents should be sorted and obtained within the stipulated time period.

On the part of business operators, they should consult with the appropriate authority regarding the acquisition of land from any individual or organisation to avoid swindling and delay in providing title documents.

#### 4.3.5. Issue 5: Insecurity and Robbery Attacks on Businesses

A highly disciplined and well-trained security force is essential to providing security for lives and properties in Nasarawa state. In that regard, reorganizing the security agencies (i.e., the Nigeria Police Force) to take them through a new re-orientation via re-training security agents is very necessary.

Furthermore, the government should solicit for the deployment of more security personnel to the state. The state government should complement the role of the Federal government (FGN) through Financial and logistic supports like vehicles, gadgets, and other equipment provided.

The Local government councils should also provide local logistics for intelligence gathering, transportation fueling, and feeding allowance to officers and men of the force on patrols and surveillance.

The Neighbourhood/local vigilante group should be mobilized, trained, and formerly incorporated into the state security programme to complement other security agencies' efforts and promote ownership.

On the part of business operators, they should ensure that their location enhances security while being more security conscious. This means employing personal security guards on their business properties if necessary.

The formation of Business association security networks to deliberate on security issues, network with similar associations across the nation, and share experiences, is highly recommended.

Business owners' periodic interface and dialogue with security agencies to clarify issues and cross-fertilize ideas will help reduce insecurity threats and conflicts.

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