

PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE NEEDS FRAMEWORK

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Abstract

The methodology adopted for this paper is essentially exploratory, and had to depend on secondary data to substantiate its claims. The paper adopted good governance as the theoretical perspective for establishing the need for public accountability, as a precursor for achieving the NEEDS framework. Despite being endowed with enormous abundant human and natural resources, Nigeria did not institute efficient and reliable regulatory mechanisms for managing the country's public resources. As a result, the history of Nigeria is replete with cases of corruption and lack of accountability which have wasted the country's resources and dampened the prospects for overcoming the challenges of underdevelopment. With the advent of civilian rule in 1999, the Obasanjo administration enunciated the NEEDS Development Framework targeted at achieving economic development and the enthronement of public accountability in the country's governance system. Among other objectives, NEEDS focuses on two critical objectives: the institutionalization of an anti-corruption regime and employment generation as part of the overall framework of tackling the development challenges facing the nation. The main argument of this paper is that the attempt to achieve these two critical objectives of NEEDS was weakened by corruption and lack of public accountability. The paper is concluded by identifying the factors responsible for lack of public accountability in Nigeria; it proffers solution for mitigating the effect on the management of public resources.

Key words: NEEDS, anti-corruption, employment generation, public accountability, good governance

“Without good government even oil wealth cannot guarantee development. ... Corruption has robbed Nigeria of opportunities to lead Africa and indeed the world ... EFCC has fallen and needs to be revived to do what it used to do, to strengthen the antigraft war”

- Senator (Mrs) Hilary Clinton, U.S. Secretary of State, at a town hall meeting in Abuja on Wednesday, August 12, 2009.

Introduction

The overarching importance of public accountability in a developing country such as Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. This is because the exploitation of the country’s natural resources and the use to which they are put require a high level of public accountability, efficiency and equity as desideratum for the goals of economic development to be attained. No doubt, the incursion of the military in 1966 into the governance system of the country enthroned a culture of embezzlement, authoritarianism and inefficiency which affected the management of the public sector and the economy; this entrenched an oil- dependent monocultural economy to the detriment of a once vibrant agrarian-economy, which placed Nigeria within the bracket of middle-income countries in the early 1960s. It was once said by a former Nigerian Head of State that the problem with Nigeria was how to spend money and not money itself. Yet a publicly-oriented accounting system in which political office holders and

bureaucrats would be held accountable for their activities and conduct while in office was not instituted. This would have helped to check their excesses, and to nudge them into patterns of behavior that are in consonance with the realization of the greatest good for the greatest number, as postulated by Jean Jacques Rousseau's theory of social contract. For the 30 years that the military held sway, what was achieved was rather the institutionalization of a culture of rent seeking, in which the Nigerian state became enmeshed in a client-patron relationship with Nigerian leaders and their clients, apologists, and praise singers plundering the commonwealth. This led to the failure of development policies and programmes with the concomitant effect of: escalation of poverty and widespread inequality, debt overhang, capital flight, stunted economic growth as well as the failure of the country to compare favourably with other nations on almost all development indices. From all indications, Nigeria became a pariah state until the inception of civilian rule in 1999, when the Obasanjo regime made spirited effort to launder the country's image through shuttle diplomacy and the implementation of reform measures.

What is public accountability?

Account rendering is done in public or at least accessible to citizens. By public accountability, we mean the accountability which pertains to public scrutiny, which demands that a public officer, whether a president, governor, legislator, permanent secretary, or local government chairman, is responsible for his actions, emanating from the exercise of power. Public accountability connotes that a public official

must take responsibility for the success or failure of his/ her actions. In other words, the “buck” must stop on his desk.

Boven (2005) submits that public accountability is a rather elusive concept. Despite being an elusive concept, public accountability constitutes an indispensable feature of modern democratic governance, because of its broad implications for public management. If public officers cannot be held accountable for their acts of commission and omission, it is an invitation to recklessness and arbitrariness. Accountability is a basic requirement for all positions of authority.

According to Akinseye-George (2010) accountability refers to the obligation of public officers and institutions to submit their activities to scrutiny by the members of the public, and by the organs and institutions of government authorized by the constitution to carry out such scrutiny. That is, a person is held responsible for whatever he does in a position he occupies, be it public or private and from the public realm, it is the responsibility of rulers to the governed based on definite procedures, which are broadly accepted by those rulers, and which can be enforced on them, should they dissent.

Public accountability, in the sense of transparency, responsiveness, and answerability, is meant to assure public confidence in government, and to bridge the gap between citizens and representatives and between governed and government (Aucoin and Heintzman, 2012). Public accountability ensures that governments are responsible for their actions; that rulers at all levels report to the ruled. Thus, government consistently informs the people about its actions that are accountable, generates confidence in the polity, and through this way,

a favourable and conducive environment for the implementation of its programmes are created. Thus, accountability is the soul of good governance as well as defines good governance to the core.

Adamolekun (2011) asserts that public accountability has *four crucial elements*: a clear definition of responsibility; implementation mechanisms; a system of review which may be referred to as feedback; and rewards and sanctions. Public accountability flows in different directions: upward, downward, between subordinates and superiors, and laterally among professional peers.

Theoretical framework: good governance theory

In contemporary times, governance issues have become not only primary in the development discourse, but are also considered crucial elements to be incorporated in the development strategy. Governance is not only about the organs or actors as affirmed by Hye (2012), but it is also about the quality of governance. The most appropriate definition of governance is expressed by UNDP (2012) as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences. Accordingly, the key dimensions of governance identified by the World Bank are: public sector management, accountability, legal framework for development and transparency and information.

As a term symbolizing the paradigm shift of the role of government, good governance is participatory, transparent and accountable, effective and equitable, and promotes the rule of law. It

ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of development resources.

A fundamental characteristic of the effectiveness of governance is public accountability. Public accountability is, therefore, a necessary ingredient for strengthening public policy implementation and the procurement process by ensuring that public officials give account of how resources, whether financial, administrative, legal or political, committed to their trust, are expended for the intended purpose. As a prerequisite for promoting good governance, public accountability becomes a *sine qua non* for achieving developmental goals and aspirations. In this regard, the accountability of the organs and institutions of governance becomes imperative, towards developing strong governance systems necessary for legitimizing the conduct of government business. In contemporary times, the search for accountability and good governance has occupied the centre stage in the quest for development as governmental and non-governmental organizations have stressed their importance. The DFID strategy papers on realizing Human Rights for Poor People (2012), the UNDP Human Development Report (2012) and the UN (2012) Declaration on the Right to Development - recognize the need for public accountability to be approached from the perspective of citizens rights, which in a developmental conceptualization, extends the rights of citizens beyond being mere beneficiaries of development, to being its rightful and legitimate claimants (Cornwall, 2010). Consequent upon this is the fact

that public accountability demands citizens' participation in the monitoring of the rights of the people, and in demanding public scrutiny and transparency in affairs that concern them.

Since the governed have transferred their rights to be governed to the sovereign who exercises such powers on their behalf, the representatives of the people either as president, governors or ministers are under obligation to ensure that their conducts meet the highest standard of public morality and expectation. Public accountability is, therefore, an institutional arrangement meant to impose integrity and legitimize the conduct of government business that are in consonance with public aspirations; while at the same time ensuring that sanctions are meted out to culprits, who subvert national interests by voting them out in the case of political appointees, or in the case of bureaucrats, the full weight of the law is brought to bear on them. Ackerman (2006) asserts that it is, therefore, a safeguard against corruption, nepotism, abuse of power and other forms of inappropriate behavior.

Consequently, good governance must, in practice, thrive under the rule of law, free from abuse, nepotism and corruption; without which the task of economic transformation cannot be accomplished. It is in recognition of this that Kofi Annan submitted that good governance is the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development (Annan, 2012). However, the lack of enabling environment in Nigeria for the conduct of government business is symptomatic of lack of good governance. With all its lofty ideals of poverty reduction, attraction of foreign investment, diversification of the economy, moral re-orientation and institutionalization of anti-corruption framework etc,

the fact still remains that corruption vitiated the effectiveness of the NEEDS document. The processes and mechanisms for realizing its targets were compromised because of the weakness of regulatory institutions or their non-existence. In particular, NEEDS failed to achieve its target of infrastructural development in order to boost the growth of the domestic economy and attract foreign investment. The truth is that its attempt to impose standards of public morality is a sham.

Constitutional provisions and the Nigerian experience prior to 1999

Section 5(5) of the constitution (1999) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides that the state shall abolish all corrupt practices and abuse of power. Article 16 goes further to stipulate that the state shall harness the resources of the nation and promote national prosperity and efficiency as well as a dynamic and self-reliant economy, while Section 16, 1(b) provides that the state shall control the national economy in such manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity. Article 16, 2 (b and c) provides that the state shall ensure that the material resources of the nation are harnessed and distributed as best as possible to serve the common good, and shall ensure that the economic system is not operated in such a manner as to permit the concentration of wealth or the means of production and exchange in the hands of few individuals or a group. Article 17(2d) equally provides that in the pursuit of the State Social Order, the exploitation of human or natural resources in any form whatsoever, for reasons other than the good of the community, shall be prevented. Article

23 also provides that the national ethics shall be discipline, integrity, dignity of labour, social justice, religious tolerance, self-reliance and patriotism. Article 24(b) provides that it shall be the duty of every citizen to join in enhancing the power, prestige and good name of Nigeria, defend Nigeria and render such national service as may be required.

To check misconduct and ensure a corrupt- free public service, Section 153 of the Constitution set up, among other things, a Code of Conduct Bureau, to which, according to Articles 72 and 209, a person in the public service of the federation must conform (Aluko, 2010). Furthermore, under the oath of office and Allegiance as contained in the Seventh schedule of the constitution, the President, Vice President, State Governors, Deputy Governors, Ministers, Commissioners, Special Advisers, Permanent Secretaries and Judicial Officers are required to pledge to preserve the fundamental objectives and directive principles of the Constitution, to ensure the sovereignty, integrity, solidarity, well being and prosperity of the country.

As part of the constitutional requirement for holding public office, several principal officers in the executive, legislature and the judiciary are required to declare their assets on assumption of office. These officers include: the President, Vice President, members of the cabinet, members of the Senate and the National Assembly, including the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of the Federation, members of the State Houses of Assembly and the Speakers and Deputy Speakers, governors and commissioners.

Despite the vaunted claims of toppling civilian regimes to stamp out corruption, corruption has always been a prominent feature of

military regimes in Nigeria. Even with these provisions, a sense of probity and accountability was lacking in the country's governance system. Till date, no Nigerian leader, except Yar' Adua, was honest enough to declare his assets. The military demonstrated apparent weakness in implementing these provisions to check corruption and enthrone accountability as well as uphold the integrity, prosperity and good name of the country. The only exception was the first republic (1960-66) during which a fairly accountable system of governance was established with regard to the implementation of national budgets. As Ogban-Iyam rightly observed: "resources were fairly utilized to develop the country. The economy was healthy as reflected in the quality of life of the people. The cost of living was much more within the reach of a majority of Nigerians than today. Salaries were regularly paid; Commissions were regularly set up to look into wages and salaries of workers. The agricultural sector was at its best. Nigeria had never had it so good so far. Groundnuts, oil palms and cocoa farms and plantations flourished and were the mainstay of the Nigerian economy. The rule of law prevailed".

The termination of the first republic and the seizure of power by the military marked the beginning of the destruction of the country's national values and structures as the military threw caution to the wind, suspended the constitution as well as abrogated acts and laws that did not serve its interest. It destroyed the existing federal structure and embarked on authoritarian rule. The civil population was roundly sidelined in running the affairs of governance, while resources were looted. Decisions were taken by the military elite without adequate consultation

with the people or their representatives. Processes of public accountability were subverted and a culture of impunity and brazen violation of the rights of the people were instituted. Opposition was muzzled; the press was battered and the economy largely mismanaged. Characteristically, the military observed no democratic ethos in governance; hence it is commonly dubbed “irresponsive regime”. Public appointments and decisions were made by fiat rather than through dialogue, tradeoff, compromise and consensus (Onyishi, 2010).

Corruption was further institutionalized during the military era under Gowon’s regime. With the toppling of Gowon’s regime in July 1975, an inquiry into the financial and administrative activities of the regime led to the indictment and dismissal of some state military governors. The illegally acquired properties were seized and the officials concerned were incarcerated for sometime before they were released. When the military regime voluntarily handed over power to the civilians in 1979, allegations of misappropriation of public fund were made which led to the enquiry into the missing N2.8 billion (then equivalent of \$5.6 billion) (Aluko, 2010).

The only military regimes that made attempt to curb corruption were that of Murtala Mohammed and Buhari. The Babangida and Abacha regimes took corruption to unprecedented despicable heights. The deplorable social, economic and political state into which the military had plunged the nation was evident in Obasanjo’s lamentation in his address at the swearing-in ceremony of ministers in Abuja on 30th June, 1999 when he declared that: “our beloved nation had been virtually on the brink of collapse. At least the past and half decades have been

characterized by calamitous retrogression in almost every conceivable sphere of life. Nigerians have indeed passed through harrowing times and watched their standard of living plummet drastically, just as their human rights were steadily eroded. Life became almost short, brutish, and nasty. These were surely the most difficult days for Nigeria since the end of the Civil War in 1970. There are many things crying for attention. Our battered national economy is certainly one of them. The grim condition of many of our citizens was worsened by the deterioration of public service where access to pipe-borne water and affordable healthcare became a dream, and the supply of electricity became epileptic and unreliable in an era in which globalization has made such services ubiquitous and cheap” (Onyishi quoted in Adegoroye, 2010).

The Obasanjo regime promised to tackle corruption frontally (Shehu, 2010): “to rid the civil service of corruption and to sanitize the entire society, there will be no sacred cows; nobody, no matter who and where, will be allowed to get away with the breach of the law or the perpetuation of corruption and evil”. It was against this background that the Obasanjo regime in 1999 initiated measures to fight corruption. Thirteen years after, corruption which is still regarded as pervasive is perceived to be responsible for the crisis of governance in contemporary Nigeria.

Under the Obasanjo presidency, attempts were made to recover the illegally acquired loot of late General Abacha (1993-1998). For the first time also, some reforms were introduced by Obasanjo to sanitize the procurement process, deal with, and reduce the incidence of corruption and the diminished accountability of public office holders namely: the

EFCC, ICPC, Fiscal Responsibility Act, and Due Process. How far these reforms have promoted the quest for the entrenchment of public accountability and the reduction of the incidence of corruption is measured by the capacity of the government to harness the potentials of her over 150 million people, with regard to the proper management of public resources, and the achievement of a 7 million job - creating economic growth as envisaged under the NEEDS development framework.

Anti-corruption measures and NEEDS

Despite great natural wealth, Nigeria remained a poor country and in jeopardy of not meeting the Millennium Development Goals. It was in recognition of this that the NEEDS document placed emphasis on the need to ensure proper management of public resources through the institutionalization of good governance, accountability and due process. To achieve this noble objective of economic and social transformation, the document identified the need to change the method of governance through restructuring thus: Government is to be made smaller, stronger, better skilled, and more efficient in delivery of essential services. It sought to transform the government from haven of corruption to an institution that spurs development and serve the people. Reforms and regulation will be implemented to ensure greater transparency, accountability, and corrupt practices will be outlawed. Government activities and budgeting will be informed by a framework that connects policy with government income and expenditure (NEEDS, 2004).

Consequently, government established the Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit (BMPU), the Independent Corrupt Practices

and Other related Crimes Commission (ICPC), the Public Procurement Commission, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) and the ratification of many international and regional anti-corruption measures and codes.

Despite the establishment of these anti-corruption agencies, they are bedevilled by a number of operational constraints, due mainly to insufficient coordination of anti-corruption activities within the public sector and inadequate funding. There are serious questions regarding their effectiveness, efficiency and impartiality. The 1999 constitution created loopholes that militate against the war against corruption. The immunity clause is regarded as a license for certain public office holders to engage in corrupt practices and undermine the execution of the mandate of the EFCC and ICPC. The Guardian (2011) reported that at least 55 high profile cases are pending before courts across the country, with many of the accused persons granted bail since 2007. Nigeria also faces the challenge of tackling corruption internally. Simply put, the social will to tackle corruption by majority of Nigerians is seriously lacking. In some sections of the Nigerian population, looting of national treasury is regarded as national cake while public officials are applauded as “heroes”.

Despite the establishment of the anti-corruption initiatives, the effort to combat corruption is adjudged to be unintegrated, uncoordinated, dishonest and a pursuit of personal vendetta. The government’s handling of the following cases provides ample

justification for the criticisms or cynicisms that characterize the anti-corruption crusade:

- The case of Dr Julius Mankanjuola (a former Permanent Secretary) and three others who were alleged to have stolen about Four Hundred and Eighty million naira (N480, 000,000 million) from the accounts of the Ministry of Defence. The matter was charged to court only for the Attorney General to file a noli prosequi on the Day of Judgment.
- The Nigerian Television Authority's broadcast showing how money was carried in *Ghana must go* purported to be bribes given to members of the House of Representatives, and the subsequent return of about Four Hundred Million Naira (N400, 000,000) to the treasury on the instruction of the former Speaker of the HOR (Gali Umar Na-Abba) at the end of the tenure of the House in May 2003.
- The illegal diversion of N360 billion from the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) under the leadership of Jackson Gaius Obaseki, and no inquiry was conducted to verify the allegation.
- The sacking of the Chairman of National Aerospace Management Agency (NAMA) few weeks after his appointment for inflating a contract by \$1 million for the Radar coverage of Nigeria's airspace. There were no formal investigations (at least not made public, if there was any),

only for Obasanjo to appoint the same person as his Special Adviser in June 2003

- The claim by the government to have spent \$900 million dollars on the Turn Around Maintenance (TAM) of the four refineries but none is functioning at full capacity
- The retirement of Vincent Azie, the former Acting Auditor General of the Federation, following his release of an Audit Report which indicted many ministries and alleged that a whopping sum of Twenty Three billion naira was siphoned from government coffers
- Following the confirmation by the former Federal Capital Territory Minister, Nasir El-Rufai, that the Senate through the Deputy Senate President and Deputy Senate Leader actually demanded for the sum of Fifty Four Million Naira (N54 million) from him, the report of the Senate Inquiry on the matter was referred to the Presidency, but no action was taken on it.
- The non-release of the Okigbo Panel Report which investigated the activities of the CBN on how the oil windfall was expended (excess sales during Gulf War in 1991). Despite several calls for the release of the report, the Obasanjo regime did not take any action. The Obasanjo regime created sacred cows by his refusal to employ the law (which he used to prosecute Abacha's family over the \$5 billion dollars which General Abacha allegedly stole) to get

explanations on the \$12.4 billion dollars allegedly embezzled by former military President Babangida.

The fight against corruption suffered severe setback under President Yar' Adua administration because of his government's lack of commitment to combat the menace. Under his watch, many corruption cases were treated with kid gloves. For instance his government shielded the former governor of Delta State, James Ibori, from prosecution, only for him to be convicted by a London court. The Halliburton scandal which indicted some of the country's past leaders did not receive his attention. One of the former governors (Lucky Igbinedion) accused of stealing billions of naira was only asked to pay a paltry fine of N3 million through plea bargain (Aturu, 2010).

President Jonathan's administration is not exempted from the cesspit of corruption into which the nation has sunk. Under the President's watch, the nation's wealth was plundered by fuel subsidy merchants and pension scams perpetrators. In a country where most Nigerians live on less than \$1 dollar a day, spending an unbudgeted N1.7 trillion naira on fuel subsidy depicts the level of waste and profligacy prevalent in the country. The un-concluded corruption cases against high profile public officials by the EFCC and the relentless looting of the treasury by government officials are indicative of the lack of political will to fight corruption. Under section 174 of the 1999 constitution, the Attorney General of the Federation is empowered to take over the prosecution of cases being handled by such agencies as the EFCC and ICPC. These constitutional loopholes empower the AGF to protect corrupt public officials and to weaken the anti-corruption agencies.

The aim of fighting corruption is to institutionalize good governance in the management of the economy, and to ensure that corrupt practices were curbed in order to achieve value for money in government expenditure. This it is believed will result in higher levels of economic growth, impact positively on poverty reduction, improve the provision of infrastructure, and attract foreign investment and position Nigeria among the 20 topmost economies of the world.

In spite of these objectives, the quantum of resources spent on the provision of economic and social services does not match output. Corruption is endemic. The nation still has a long way to go in terms of the achievement of prudent spending. The World Bank (Christain Aid, 2012) reports that the real problem with Nigeria's budgetary system is low efficiency of budget spending, not inadequate funding. And according to former World Bank President, Paul Woifowitz, Nigeria lost US\$300 billion to corruption in the last four decades (CRR, 2012). It is not surprising that Nigeria is ranked more corrupt than 37 out of 45 African countries. Nigeria is globally ranked 142 out of 164 countries. The remarks of the retiring Italian Ambassador to Nigeria in the Guardian Newspaper, Sunday, August, 9, 2009 are apt in this regard: "This is why we have said corruption is at the heart of it all. The vital sectors in Nigeria all have aging infrastructure and lack equipment because the people behind the contracts have their vested interests. They bring cheap equipment for jobs. .. The refineries are working at low rate because there are people who are interested in bringing fuel from abroad" Still speaking on the implications of bad governance, Jone Wolfensohn (2007), former President of the World Bank, has correctly

stressed that: “countries may come up with sound fiscal and monetary policy, but if they do not have good governance; if they do not control the issue of corruption; if they do not have a complete legal system which protects human rights, property rights and contracts, which gives a framework for bankruptcy laws and a predictable tax system; if they do not have an open and regulated financial system and appropriate legislation and behavior that is transparent, their development is fundamentally flawed and will not last”.

NEEDS and employment generation

NEEDS targets a minimum annual GDP growth rates of 5-7 percent and an average per capita consumption growth of at least 2 percent per annum. Despite the appreciable GDP growth rates recorded since 1999: 6.0% in 2008, 7.0% in 2009, 7.85% in 2010 and 7.98% in 2011; the nation’s unemployment rate is alarming. The high level of unemployment has exacerbated the poverty situation. World Bank figures show that about 40 million persons of working age were unemployed, representing 28.57% of 140 million people. According to the Minister of finance, 49% of youths, aged 15 to 24, living in the urban areas, are jobless compared to 39.7% of their counterparts in the rural areas, while 50% of Nigerian university and polytechnic graduates have no jobs. To worsen the nation’s unemployment crisis, economy-wide capacity utilization rate (industry and agriculture) stands at about 30%, while credit to the productive sectors has dried up following the global economic meltdown and under- investment in the economy (Punch, 2010).

Growth rate was without development; it did not impact positively on employment. While per capita income is still low, the realized growth rates are very much below the economy's potential and the expected double digit growth that would make a significant dent on poverty reduction. This is what Nnadozie (2012) refers to as the "Nigerian Growth Paradox". Strong economic growth of the past decade has not translated into higher employment rates. Nigeria's continuous reliance on oil as major foreign exchange earner renders the economy vulnerable to the booms and burst cycle, characteristic of the global capitalist economy, with its concomitant far-reaching consequences on macro-economic stability and socio-economic development. Agriculture has remained dormant, and crude oil production is yet to impact positively on other sectors of the economy, through generation of oil-related activities and services in order to generate employment. Again, Nigeria continues to spend billions of dollars on food importation. As the global economic crisis impacted negatively on Nigeria, its external sector suffered a decline. With the drop in exports, foreign currency inflows dried up, with foreign reserves falling from US\$67 billion in June, 2008 to US\$45.7 billion dollars in November, 2012 (Usman, 2012).

Despite the introduction of reforms, the Nigerian economy has not responded positively due to a number of challenges that are bedeviling it. Although the economy has surpassed the growth rates of the 1980 and 1990s which averaged GDP growth rates of 1.95 and 2.87 percent respectively, thus suggesting a positive impact of the various economic management strategies; but not enough to trigger off the

diversification of the dependent economy and the creation of economic integration.

The economy's lack of diversification is symptomatic of the near-intractable problem of lack of infrastructure. Lack of infrastructure constrains private investment and increases the cost of doing business in the country. The infrastructure deficit is also responsible for the poor level of manufacturing which is tangential to job creation. The nation's industrialization efforts have been aborted by poor electricity generation which is still very low and below the prescribed targets, thus compounding the problems of industry. Since 1999, successive governments have made a plethora of promises of improved power supply, yet to no avail. The Obasanjo government's promise of generating 10,000 MW of electricity by December, 2007 never materialized. Rather than improve, average electricity generation fell from a level of 3,850 mw/h in the first quarter of 2008 to 2,500 mw/h in the second quarter. President Yar'Adua/ Jonathan's administration promised to generate 6,000mw by December 2009. Presently, generation is averaging 4,000 mw, but not enough to ensure stable power supply. Thus, since 1999, there has been so much talk by successive governments of ensuring adequate power supply. Huge sums of money have allegedly been spent. Yet, the nation is continuously in darkness. Since the inception of civil rule in 1999, Nigeria has spent millions of naira on infrastructure without getting commensurate results. For instance, the House of Representative Power probe Committee set up in 2008 to investigate the large scale corruption in the power sector between 1999 and 2007 reported that the sum of US\$13, 278, 937, 409

dollars was expended on the power sector in eight years while commitments that were not funded amounted to US\$12. In all, 21 persons and 36 companies were accused of subversion of government policy on due process, which gave rise to project over-scoping, that is extension of contract beyond its original size, inflation of cost, duplication of contract awards and general lack of performance (Abimboye et al, 2009).

Besides, the economy is dominated by primary production, with agriculture which is mainly rudimentary and practiced by peasantry, accounting for 41% of GDP. This is followed by crude oil production with a GDP contribution of 22%, while the secondary sector, especially manufacturing stagnating at 3.7-8% of the GDP (NEEDS II, 2007). This ugly scenario predisposes Nigeria as one of the least industrialized countries in Africa. With a Competitiveness Index of 3.38 in 2011, Nigeria ranked 127th out of 139 countries in the world, below 18 other African countries (Nnadozie, 2012). Infrastructural deficiency remains the most important constraint to job-creation because of its centrality to economic development. The roads network (km per 1000 inhabitants), rail systems and electricity generation (kilowatt hours per inhabitant) are below peer countries like Indonesia and South Africa. This diminishes the prospects for attracting foreign investment and job creation. Without large scale manufacturing, especially for exports, the prospects for job creation will remain a mirage.

The urgent need to arrest the unemployment situation is recognized by NEEDS. While the private sector is expected to generate most of the new jobs, the government is to create the enabling

environment for the private sector to thrive (NEEDS, 2004). However, the critical question to ask is: has Nigeria a virile and vibrant private sector capable of rising up to the challenge of economic development.

Over the years, the failure of good leadership in both the public and private sectors has been characterized by systemic corruption, low levels of transparency and accountability. The most profound failure of good corporate governance is evidenced by the institutionalization of a rent-seeking state which is hijacked by an oligarchy, whose stock-in-trade was the sharing of the country's oil wealth patronage to its members and various interest groups. This chain of clientelism produced a class of idle businessmen- importers, exporters, contractors and agents of multinational corporations who masquerade as the private sector, but whose economic survival depended on milking the economy dry through corrupt practices, while contributing little or nothing to investment and production of goods and services for a prosperous Nigeria. This contradiction produced a weak private sector that cannot champion the cause of job and wealth creation because it has abandoned its traditional role as catalysts of economic growth and development. The major constraints facing the private sector group are as follows (CRR, 2012): "the private sector has been dogged by weakness inherent in its skewed structure. It is dominated by a few multinationals that are heavily dependent on imports and operate largely as enclaves and a large segment of small and medium-sized enterprises with very little, if any, linkage to the multinationals. A rent-seeking and unproductive culture of overdependence on government patronage and contracts, with very little value added, governs the sector. As a result of these factors, Nigeria has

become a nation of traders, with a very weak and stagnant domestic private sector. According to Aluko (2009), “corruption in developing countries, with the consequent inefficiency it brings into the economic activities of governments, has been one of the main reasons for the plea for the state to retreat from the economy and the increasing worldwide demand for more markets. In order to stem the apparently increasing tide of corruption, inefficiency and diminished public accountability, there is a renewed emphasis to limit the economic role of the state through deregulation, liberalization, privatization and globalization of the economy.”

According to Kabbaj (2003), for poor countries that face an acute shortage of developmental resources, corruption can become a major hindrance to their economic growth. Hence, poverty reduction in Nigeria is an uphill task. Despite attempts at realizing the MDGs goal on poverty reduction, Nigeria’s poverty rate rose from 54% in 2004 to 69% in 2010, according to statistics released by the National Bureau for Statistics.

Factors responsible for lack of public accountability in Nigeria

1) Lack of political and social will to tackle corruption

The state is yet to create the enabling environment to fight corruption. Nigerian leaders and the political class suffer from an apparent lack of willingness to fight corruption. It is not enough to establish anti-corruption agencies that are not empowered to carry out their functions. The lack of political will is manifest in operational constraints like lack of adequate funding and political interference. The

fact that the anti-corruption agencies are not independent forces them to compromise their functions and to engage in selective prosecution of anti-corruption cases. A major hindrance to the fight against corruption is the lack of social will by the Nigerian people. Oil revenue is regarded as national cake which must be enjoyed.

2) The nature of the state in Africa.

What emerged after the exit of the colonialists is a state that is enmeshed in class struggle, instead of rising above it and mediating it. As the post-colonial state was constituted, it was used as an instrument of class domination. Rather than champion the cause of development, the state had a prebendalist orientation that was used by the privileged class to amass wealth. The state, therefore, deviated from its developmental and transformational role, became politicized and eroded the values and mores of the society. The state is meant to act as an impartial arbiter in the regulation of economic activities, maintain peace and order and ensure that the ideals of development are achieved. Moreover, the state must ensure that the resources of the state are distributed equitably in line with constitutional obligation which commits the state to the welfare of the people. Rather than do this, the state which has become synonymous with the privileged class, is enmeshed in the struggle for political power and economic survival. Robinson (Ukwaba, 2007) posits that since the state is a major instrument of class formation, wealth accumulation, exploitation and domination, the ruling class in collaboration with other members of the dominant class including the petty bourgeoisie, national bourgeoisie and comprador bourgeoisie, view corruption as a means of

maintaining existing power structures and system of political control to the neglect of everything else.

3) Lack of enforcement of the code of conduct for public officers and anti-corruption law

Nigeria has a considerable number of anti-corruption institutions and laws to tackle the issue of corruption and lack of public accountability. According to Dike (2009), some human ailments could require many doses of medicines to be treated. Similarly, the menace of corruption, which has eaten deep into the social fabric of Nigeria, would require all the necessary medicines to effectively control it. In other words, no single and simple remedies will do it. Nigeria has, in theory, the solutions to tackle corruption but like other issues (poverty) bedeviling the nation, implementation of the laws are the Achilles. Nigerian leaders deliberately created constitutional loopholes in the fight against corruption.

4) Erosion of ethical values and standards

Nigerians have lost their pristine ethical values and moral standards that held the society together. The craze for money and materialism define social relations in contemporary Nigeria. Hard work, honesty and personal achievement are no longer values to be cherished. The emphasis today is on how much wealth and material things that one has acquired. The discovery of oil and the allure of its wealth destroyed Nigeria's ethical foundation and painted a deceptive picture of a country with so much petro-wealth. In his pontification on the state of corruption in Nigeria, Anwana, (2010) asserts that no doubt, corruption has become a cankerworm, a sort of culture in present day Nigeria. It is practiced

with brazen impunity at every level; the magnitude depends on what is available. Even the Nigerian society is structured in such a way that the man, who goes into office and decides to live a contented life, is regarded as a huge failure, by his community. This explains why so many communities hunt after public officers to exchange traditional honours and titles for a share of the loots, a way of having a taste of the “national cake”. . . . it is a gangrene that has eaten deep into the fabrics of national life.

5) Poverty and Greed

Nigeria has an overwhelming population of poor people. As most Nigerians live on less than 1dollar a day, they are vulnerable to corrupt influences because most of their basic needs for survival like shelter, clothing, food, and employment are not met. Nigerian leaders and politicians prefer keeping Nigerians in poverty so that they can be objects of manipulation during elections. While the privileged class loots the treasury and lives in affluence, others like civil servants are poorly paid which exposes them to corrupt influences.

6) Lack of good governance

Whereas the constitution commits the Nigerian state to the welfare and security of Nigerians, in reality, what obtains is the impoverishment of Nigeria through lack of good governance. The poor qualities of governance and lack of accountability have worsened their living conditions. According to Wolfowitz (2007) the fight for good governance and the fight against corruption is truly the frontline. Poor governance leading to corruption is a cancer on the development process, and a cancer that is unfortunately the cause of a good deal of the poverty

that we have seen and particularly in Africa. Improvement in governance is the reason we are seeing things begin to change.

Conclusion

No doubt, the institutionalization of public accountability is a sine qua non for the achievement of the ideals of NEEDS. This is evident in the failure of anti-corruption measures instituted by government, because the resources of the nation which are meant for developing the country are looted with impunity. Lack of good governance is also evident in the existence of constitutional loopholes and the lack of political will by the state to sanction corrupt officers. The adverse effect of corruption on national development for a country with more than 140 million people is more devastating than a nuclear bomb. While a nuclear bomb will kill in thousands, corruption kills in millions. It kills Nigerians yearly in their millions through high rate of road accidents due to ill-maintained roads; compromised air travel practices that lead to plane crashes; poor feeding and lack of access to health services which results in death due to malnutrition and high prevalence of preventable diseases, high maternal and child mortality rates, HIV/AIDS, fake drugs, etc. There is the need for civil society groups and the generality of Nigerians to rise up to the challenge of public accountability.

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