

**RE-ENGINEERING THE NIGERIAN SYSTEM FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**

**Molecular Genetics and Infectious Diseases Laboratory, Abubakar
Tafawa Balewa University Teaching Hospital, Bauchi, Bauchi State**

KOGI MYIRIAH PRUDENCE

08026315572

08187390840

mpkogi.18@gmail.com

Introduction

I look at Nigeria today and wonder how we got here; it is now a country with one of the lowest standards of living in the world, gross insecurity and an indifferent breed of leaders who care less for the people they came into power to serve, and more for how much they have in their bank accounts when they complete their leadership tenure and an additional second round. This is the country that is said to be the *Giant of Africa* being the largest and most populated country on the continent and one that is situated in a geographical location where natural resources abound. (USIP, 2021).

The 2023 general elections are fast approaching and many Nigerians are wondering whether there is hope for a change in this country, particularly because the past seven and a half years have been hell under the incumbent government; apart from relying on Nigerian leaders as the primary agent of change and national development - which has failed in time past - what new and more effective methods can be applied so that the Nigerian system stands a chance for change, consistent and sustainable growth and development? From a corrupt governmental structure to a tired people beaten down by chronic poverty and serious insecurity, one would wonder if Nigeria's lost glory can even be restored, let alone reach the heights of sustainable development. Perhaps we have been addressing the dire situation using the least effective methods and there's a better way to re-engineer the system and finally ensure sustainable development.

Once upon a time, I lived in a Nigeria where I could lie outside with my entire family to stargaze, tell funny stories and feel the cool evening breeze brush against my skin whilst I wondered why the crescent moon which was in full array last night, was only half of its glory tonight. That was a time when I only had to worry about the lousy mosquito bites and the loud chirping of the crickets as I marveled at the wonder of the God who made all the wonders of my world - my beloved country, Nigeria. I still remember the pride I felt as I sang the national anthem and said the pledge like some young soldier who was ready to go to the front lines of battle for her fatherland. I surely thought I had to be the luckiest girl in the world to be born Nigerian. One could wrap these feelings up in a cute bundle called 'childhood' but indeed, the Nigeria I knew then was way better than the one I know now. I grew up, we all did, as did the trouble that beset my beloved country; it continued to spiral from bad to worse and then we learned to complain, expertly playing the blame game. We mastered the art of sitting at round tables to bemoan our godforsaken country and all

those who were to blame for the decline in its past glory. We learnt to read the facts and analyze the stats, trying to figure out who was doing what they ought not to do or not doing what was expected of them to do. Abacha had to have set the ball of corruption rolling, Obasanjo was definitely a shrewd man, Yar'adua died too soon to have made any significant impact, Jonathan did not see the baton coming so he fumbled and wobbled uncomfortably until he was ousted by a Knight in shining armor, only that Buhari did not come to rescue Nigeria, he came to take his own pound of flesh. On and on we argued during prep time, games periods, in the dining halls and our various hostels; expert problem analysts who never thought that we should, for once, think about how we could make our country better.

Now I have reached adulthood and it feels like the scales just fell off my eyes. I see that if I don't do something, my children will never experience a better Nigeria than I ever did; in fact, they would never know the feeling of pure pride I once had as I saluted and pledged to Nigeria my country.

Definition of Terms

What is development anyway?

As an idea, development has been defined as the inclusion of all efforts to see that the lives and existence of all human beings, especially their physical needs are equally met without giving special treatment to a certain class of individuals, and this in the way that will last without posing a threat to the future (Gboyega, 2003). The Merriam Webster dictionary gives quite the vast definition for the root word, ***develop***. These definitions are within the context of the topic we are exploring and are as follows;

- *To cause to evolve or unfold gradually: to lead or conduct (something) through a succession of states or changes each of which is preparatory for the next*
- *To expand by a process of growth*
- *To work out the possibilities of*

The Cambridge Dictionary defined the word ***development*** as *the process in which someone or something grows or changes and becomes more advanced.*

So from the definitions above, it can be said that *sustainable development* is *advanced change and growth that lasts and outlives several generations*. Studies have shown that for a country to grow and sustain itself, development is non-negotiable (Lawal et al, 2011)

What does it mean to re-engineer?

The verb, engineer, is defined by the Oxford Languages Dictionary as *to design and build a machine or structure and also to skillfully arrange for something to occur, while the process of reengineering is to redesign a device or machine and restructure a company or part of its operations especially by exploiting information technology*.

What is a system?

A **system** is a *regularly interacting or interdependent group of items forming a unified whole* while in the context of Nigeria as a country; it is *a form of social, economic, or political organization or practice* according to the Merriam Webster Dictionary.

Now that a more comprehensive view of the topic; Re-engineering the Nigerian System for Sustainable Development, has been put in perspective by the definitions above, the topic can be considered in more detail. To recognize that there is need for a restructuring and redesigning of the Nigerian system connotes that there is an already existing one, one that was established over sixty years ago, and which has over time, failed, hence the need for a change that needs to be re-introduced as an answer. Another question that begs to be asked is why the existing system did not stand the test of time; the answer to this question will determine what the new design and structure would have to possess in order to initiate the kind of development that will last - a sustainable development. What went wrong? What needs to be done to make it better?

(Mimiko, 1998) alleges that the first reason why the existing system stopped working a long time ago is because the executive power for decision making is actually in the hands of a few influential people and that these people never make decisions in the interest of the development of the masses, and so they carry out their selfish agendas without regard for the citizens and their opinions and interests. This is true. But for how long will the citizens of Nigeria continue to sit back and allow their past, present and future - the entirety of their existence be determined by a bunch of rich and

powerful 1%? Isn't there something we ought to be able to do for ourselves and our nation at large to make a significant difference? What happened to the power of numbers?

The short narrative above points to the fact that the average Nigerian thinks that the problems that plague the country are someone else's fault other than theirs. This could be true, technically, but the sin of omission is also equal to the sin of commission. This is to say that one might not be guilty of actively doing wrong but the fact that they did not rise up to do the right things also contributes to the rut we find ourselves in as a people and as a country. So I would say that the first step to re-engineering the Nigerian system for sustainable development is to start owning up to our individual responsibilities to Nigeria as citizens of the country. How? One might ask.

1. The role of the family in national development.

A study conducted in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria investigated the role that family attachment, monitoring, guidance and control had to play in the insurgent activities of the terrorist group, Boko Haram and the investigation revealed that the key informants who were interviewed were children who lacked the above family orientation and so were the target recruits for the terrorist group (Y. Mohammed *et al*, 2018). The International Federation for Family Development (IFFD) stated in a paper that culture is an inherent part of sustainable development for every society, and nation at large, while the family is the natural habitat in which culture and moral ethics can easily be imbibed, and so a very important part of the nation.

We were taught, as early as at the primary level of education, that the family is the basic unit of the society, which in turn, makes up a nation. The first point of contact for a newborn is the family; this is the platform on which a baby begins the process of learning and grooming – the home. If a child does not learn to talk, walk or eat right in its early stages of development, chances are that it will continue to do those things wrong without the event of an early intervention. So the family plays a very significant role, if not the most significant, in the development of the nation. The Bible, which has been one of the earliest influences to the culture of civilization and also the foundation of many national government systems, states that when a child is trained properly, they grow up to manifest a greater part of their training even at old age (Proverbs 22:6). Effective training has been proven by research to be most aided by the 'do as I do' method of teaching, especially for children in the early stages of development. If the parent or guardian needs to teach

the child a new skill or virtue, they need to first model it for the child to see and learn (*Ahn et al, 2018*). This means that the role that parents have to play in the place of effectively training their children to be moral and responsible members of the society and the nation is for them to first practice what they preach. That way, the children have no excuse not to become upright citizens of the country; corruption, laziness and irresponsibility will be tackled from the grassroots and the upcoming generations would be better than the ones before them, thereby bringing about a systemic national change and then eventually, national development.

Examples of this theory coming into play in the Bible can be seen in the books of 2 Kings and the Chronicles; majority of the kings who did evil in the sight of God had their sons succeed them to also do evil in his sight. When there was an exception, as in the case of Josiah, Jehoshaphat, etc, their mothers were usually mentioned in the accounts because they played a major role in raising that king as a child even though ordinarily, the training of successors was majorly the job of the king (*Theology Of Work Project, 2014*).

2. The role of the youth in national development.

The youth have been said to be a puissant force of every nation and have always played important roles in helping many developed nations reach the heights they have achieved. A good example can be found among the Asian countries and their quest to sustain consistent growth over several generations starting from the Japanese empire to the development of the nations it colonized before (*Mimiko, 1998; Adelman, 1995*). This is because the youth are young and strong, hence why they are the labor force and the drivers of the economic power of the nation through the production of goods and services that generate revenue for the nation. As at 2006 the results of a census conducted in Nigeria showed that 70% of the Nigerian population were young people within the ages of 15-30 years (*Rt. Hon. Eugene Odoh, Eme, Okechukwu Innocent, 2014*). This was also the statistics for the whole of Africa as at 2011 (*United Nations, 2010*). (*Gyimah-Brempong and Kimenyi, 2013:2*) postulated that since 42% of the Africa's population was less than 15 years as at 2011, then the population of the youth in Africa will continue to grow as time goes on which is very unlike the other continents of the world whose youth population tends to reduce as the years go by.

These findings therefore further establish the point that the re-engineering of the Nigerian system for sustainable growth lies on the shoulders of Nigerian youth rather than on the senior citizens of the nation, even the ones that are in the place of leadership as we speak. However, about half the youth population of Nigeria is unemployed and the average Nigerian youth has taken to vices such as drinking, smoking, drug abuse, violent crimes, terrorist recruits, kidnapping, robbery, etc (*Ajufo, Beatrice. 2013*); but the truth is that the government cannot provide suitable jobs for all Nigerian youth. This is why a lot of youth empowerment schemes have been put in place to equip the youths with certain skills that will allow them to become self employed and even transition into employers of labor in the long run, thereby reducing the burden of the government and increasing the chances of more youth getting employed, more goods and services being produced and more revenue being generated by the nation on a large scale. If half the population of Nigerian youth have already engaged in vices such as the ones mentioned above, then it means that there is the other half waiting to contribute to the change that the Nigerian system needs.

And one of the ways to sensitize the Nigerian youth population for sustainable national development is to allow them to take responsibility for their immediate communities. The United Nations says that youth participation will play a great role in national development if youth understand that they are the major stakeholders of the future of the nation and that the government should change the perspective in which they see them. The government should graduate from seeing the youth only as contributors to the problems bedeviling the nation, to seeing them as the solution to these problems. This way, the youth would be encouraged to actively participate in the development of the nation. If they contribute to the restructuring of the Nigerian system, the government can be sure that they will take responsibility for ensuring that national development is sustained for a longer period of time. This kind of reform will therefore begin in their immediate communities where the community youths and their leaders carry out projects thereby first adding value to themselves, and then to their community. The United Nations also compiled a number of case studies that proved the viability of youth participation as a tool for development and how to influence its adoption and implementation in the following areas of national development:

- Organization development; in that various organizations are advised to support youth participation within their organizations by gradually involving them in decision making

processes and asking their input as regards certain organizational policies and suggestions on how to improve the system.

- Implementation; after listening to and putting their suggestions into consideration, allowing them to participate in the implementation of the new ideas they bring forward will encourage them to exercise their new found freedom to contribute in the future - not only in their workplaces but also wherever they find themselves.
- Monitoring and evaluation; because these youth were part of the process of setting the ball rolling on one project or the other, they will feel responsible for seeing that what was implemented is sustained. They automatically become supervisors and law enforcement agents for these projects or policies.
- Policy and planning; by now majority of the youth would be ready to participate in any projects that the government or other organizations want to carry out both locally and nationally.

This method of approach also prevents the youth population from being a burden to the government as they are able to cater for their own needs through participation. And so instead of the government being faced with the challenge of effective entry into certain communities for development purposes, they can go through the community youths and stand the chance of gaining the confidence of the community members since their youth are at the forefront supporting the project the government or any other organization is trying to carry out in the community. This is the strategy that has been employed by the Altruistic Youth Initiative (AYI), a nongovernmental organization based in Bauchi State where I am currently serving and also the organization I volunteer under; it was formed to mobilize the youth to find ways to participate in the sustainable development of themselves, their communities and the entire nation. It is not just about the promotion of youth participation but also the creation of a system of accountability where the government is accountable to the youth and the youth are also accountable to the government and therefore an effective system of checks and balances is put in place which will fuel the sustainability of national development.

A biblical example of this strategy in play is when the Israeli army was faced with the formidable Philistine giant, Goliath and neither the king, Saul, nor any man in the army could stand against him. When the teenage shepherd boy, David, who was running his father's errand to his brothers

in the army came and heard the Philistine defying the armies of Israel and their God, he took it quite personally and decided to kill Goliath himself - and God was with him. David indeed killed that giant that had been taunting the armies of Israel for quite a number of days with a sling and a stone and saved his whole nation that day (1 Samuel 17:1-58). If King Saul had despised the boy's zeal and courage, perhaps the whole armies of Israel would have been wiped out instead on that day.

3. The role of the Church/Christianity in national development.

Since the entry of Christianity into Africa in the 19th century, and the establishment of the Church by the European missionaries who simultaneously brought the gospel and western education to the dark continent and the Nigerian British Colony, both have been the better for it as its principles are ingrained in the Nigerian system. In Nigeria today, it is clear that Christian dominated states and regions within the states are usually more developed educationally, socially and economically. According to (Asadu, 2015): *Christianity is an agent of transformation.*

Judging from history, the Church which is the body or organization of the Christian believers has always had a significant role to play in nation building and sustainable development. This is because it has been known to influence and moderate the character and behavior of people in the society (Asadu, 2021). In fact the Ten Commandments from the Bible, the *modus operandi* of the Church and the Christian faith, is featured in the laws of every country, including Nigeria. Beyond Christianity being a religion or faith and the Church being the body of believers in this faith, it is a way of living that is infused into everyone that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, his death on the cross of Calvary to take away the sins of the world and his resurrection back to life after three days, a significance of new and eternal life in God. This new life in Christ by his Holy Spirit, helps believers live above sin and the vices that erode every society, that peace may reign and that the world may be the better for it; so by design, the Church was created to make the world a better place by grooming better human beings and members of the society and the nation. This is highlighted in scriptures like Matthew 5:13-16 where Christians are referred to as the *salt of the earth* and *light of the world* by Jesus in one of his sermons, meaning that Christians are meant to initiate and sustain significant and positive changes wherever they are or go. Christians are also enjoined to obey all constituted authority (1 Peter 2:13-17, Romans 13:1-2, Titus 3:1-2, Hebrews

13:17, Romans 13:3-5, Matthew 22:21), even bosses at places of work (1 Peter 2:18-21, Ephesians 6:5-6).

Examples of children of God participating in governance and influencing sustainable national development can be seen in biblical history records with the likes of Moses, Joseph, Daniel, David, Solomon, etc. Jesus Christ himself contributed greatly to the development of the health and economic sectors of everywhere he went while he was here on earth as he went about healing the sick, raising the dead and feeding the hungry (The Gospels). He didn't stop there, Jesus modeled the importance of mentorship of the next generation by grooming his twelve disciples to carry on the good work he started so that it will continue for years to come; this is how the gospel reached Africa and Nigeria as we now know it. The love, compassion, kindness, faithfulness, miracles, signs and wonders are meant to continue everywhere Christians go (Matthew 28:16-20).

Many of the reformers of recent history have been Christians carrying out the injunction that Jesus gave more than 2000 years ago; talk about Mother Theresa, Florence Nightingale, Martin Luther King, John Calvin, William Tyndale, Billy Graham, John Wesley, Samuel Ajayi Crowder, etc. (Pettinger, Tejvan, 2015) (Dictionary of African Christian Biography, 1998).

The role of the Church in re-engineering the Nigerian system for sustainable development is all encompassing as Christians are supposed to permeate every nook and cranny of the nation in order to make a difference in it.

Conclusion

The purpose of this essay is to point out certain tools for reform that have been underutilized in time past because their significance in contributing to a better Nigeria have been generally underestimated and so based on history, research and experience, I think that they should be given more consideration and implemented so that Nigeria can stand a better chance for future growth and national development that will stand the test of time.

References

1. Gabriel, Florenda. (1998). The Role And Contribution Of Home Economics To National Development 1. The UP Journal of Home Economics. 25. 21-34.

2. Ahn, JN, Hu, D, Vega, M. "Do as I do, not as I say": Using social learning theory to unpack the impact of role models on students' outcomes in education. *Soc Personal Psychol Compass*. 2020; 14:e12517. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12517>
3. Contributors: Jill Baker, Brian Housman, Alice Mathews and David Lamb. Adopted by the Theology of Work Project Board June 2, 2014; additional material April 22, 2020. Author: Theology of Work Project <https://www.theologyofwork.org/old-testament/samuel-kings-chronicles-and-work#preparing-for-a-successor-to-israels-throne-1-kings-1-1-chronicles-22>
4. *Journal of Public Administration and Policy Research* Vol. 3(9), pp. 237-241, November 2011 Available online <http://www.academicjournals.org/jpapr> DOI: 10.5897/JPAPR11.012 ISSN 2141-2480 ©2011 Academic Journals
5. Yinusa Mohammed (1), Oluyemi Joseph (1), Bashiru Salawu (1), Abdulateef Raji (1), Emmanuel Atolagbe (1), Adejoke Joseph (2) The Family and National Development: How can the Family Forestall Future Insurgency Activities in the Nigerian Society? DOI: <http://doi.org/10.26758/8.1.23>
6. International Federation for Family Development (IFFD) NGO in Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC , The Crucial Role of Families
7. Rt. Hon. Eugene Odoh, Eme, Okechukwu Innocent, The Role of Youth in National Development *Singaporean Journal of Business Economics and Management Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2014 [http://www.singaporeanjbem.com/VOL_3_\(2\)_SG.php](http://www.singaporeanjbem.com/VOL_3_(2)_SG.php)
8. Ajufo, Beatrice. (2013). Challenges of Youth Unemployment in Nigeria: Effective Career Guidance as a Panacea. *African Research Review*. 7. 10.4314/afrrrev.v7i1.21. DOI:10.4314/afrrrev.v7i1.21
9. Asadu, George. (2021). Christianity and national development: The Nigeria experience. *HTS Theological Studies*, 77(1), 1-9. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i1.6307>
10. Pettinger, Tejvan "Famous Christians", Oxford, UK. www.biographyonline.net – 10th March 2015.
11. The Current Situation in Nigeria <https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/08/current-situation-nigeria>

