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## Canadian Foreign Policy Optic

CONFERENCE REPORT

Democracy Transformation in Nigeria

April 14th - 15th, 1999

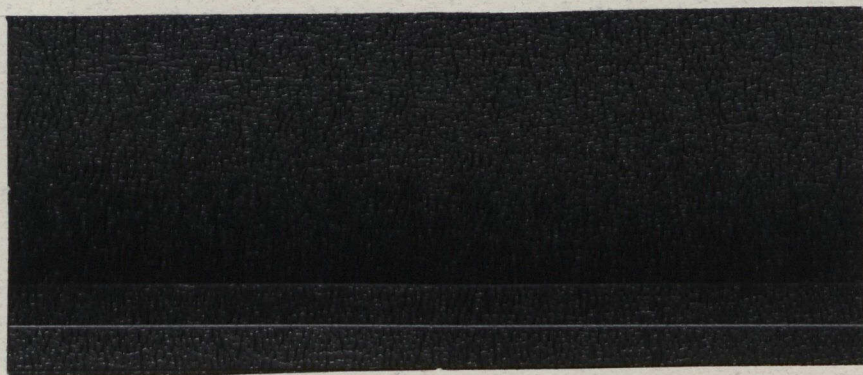
Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

April 14-15, 1999

Working Group on Nigeria

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## CONFERENCE REPORT

# Democratic Transformation in Nigeria: Canadian Foreign Policy Options

April 14th - 15th, 1999  
Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Working Group on Nigeria  
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Dept. of Foreign Affairs  
Min. des Affaires étrangères

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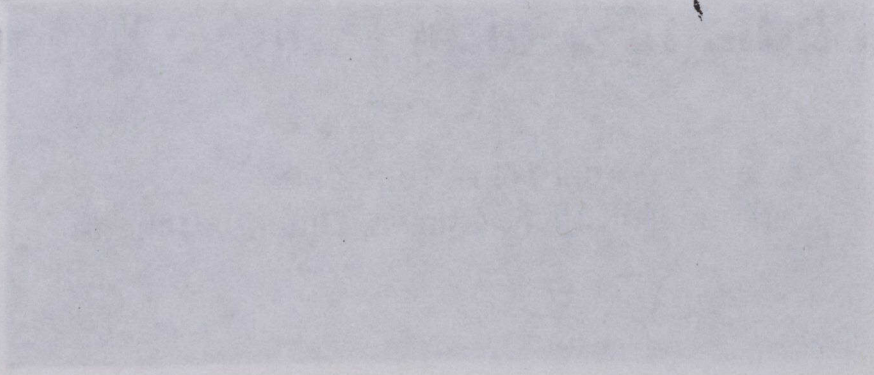
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Democratic Transformation in Nigeria:  
Challenges and Prospects



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## CONFERENCE REPORT

# Democratic Transformation in Nigeria: Canadian Foreign Policy Options

April 14th - 15th, 1999

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## I. Introduction

In the days following the sudden and unexpected death of Nigerian dictator General Sani Abacha in June 1998, the winds of change finally began to blow stronger in Africa's largest country, long the subject of repressive and stifling military rule. Abacha's replacement, General Abdulsalam Abubakar, quickly moved to revise and reschedule Abacha's program of transition to civilian democratic rule, the sincerity of which had been doubted by many Nigerians and international observers. The new timetable called for a relatively swift process of transition. It consisted of a series of elections with formal handover to civilian authorities to take place by the end of May 1999.

Unlike most Nigerian military rulers before him, Abubakar kept his promises. Presidential elections were held in February and Olesegun Obasanjo emerged as Nigeria's new civilian president-elect. His presidency was inaugurated on May 29th, 1999 marking the beginning of a new era in Nigeria, one in which the Nigerian people have invested tremendous hopes and expectations.

Canada and Canadians have long followed political developments in Nigeria with keen interest and abiding concern. The Government of Canada particularly distinguished itself in November, 1995 when it led a movement to have Nigeria, notorious for its human rights abuses, suspended from the Commonwealth for executing Nigerian poet and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other members of Nigeria's Ogoni people. In December 1995, Canadian church and secular agencies and Nigerian pro-democracy groups in Canada formed the Working Group on Nigeria (WGN), the purpose of which was to undertake collaborative initiatives to support the democratic aspirations of the Nigerian people. Among the WGN's successes was the creation, in partnership with CIDA, of the Canadian Democracy Fund for Nigeria. The Fund enabled Canadian NGOs to strategically channel money to civil society organizations in Nigeria that were working to develop the country's democratic culture and instill respect for human rights.

After the death of Sani Abacha, and invigorated by the optimism surrounding initiatives taken by General Abubakar, WGN members decided that it was time to plan for the post-dictatorship period. If Nigeria was indeed to become a civilian democracy by May, 1999 strategic support from donor countries like Canada would be required to help Nigeria's fledgeling democratic institutions take root, grow and develop. A conference was envisaged and a planning

committee struck. With assistance from representatives in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and CIDA, funds were secured from the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development.

The efforts of many people and agencies culminated in the successful convening of the two day event "Democratic Transformation in Nigeria: Canadian Foreign Policy Options" in Ottawa April 14-15, 1999. Members of the WGN, along with representatives of CIDA, Foreign Affairs, Canadian academics and Nigerian experts from abroad met to discuss ways in which Canada might best support strategies to increase citizen participation, distribute wealth equitably, alleviate poverty, and sustain democratic development in Nigeria. General and specific recommendations were formulated to inform and guide Canadian policy on Nigeria in the months and years ahead.

This report is the written record of the conference. It is hereby submitted to members of the WGN and to the Government of Canada for information and follow up.

Gary W. Kenny  
Chairperson, Working Group on Nigeria

## **II. Acknowledgments**

The Working Group on Nigeria wishes to thank the following organizations and individuals for helping to make the April conference a success:

Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development

Mr. Richard Fee, Presbyterian World Service and Development (contracting agency)

Working Group on Nigeria Conference Planning Committee

Mr. Collins Babalola, contractee of Conference Planning Committee

Ms. Pat Williams, part-time coordinator, Working Group on Nigeria

Mr. Geoff Charlebois, Desk Officer for Nigeria, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Mr. Jonathan Arnold, CIDA

All those who prepared papers and acted as resource people for the conference, especially Nigerians from abroad

All those who chaired and/or facilitated conference sessions

Ms. Anne Gillies, recorder and report writer

### III. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Gary Kenny, Chair of the Working Group in Nigeria, opened the conference, along with Stephen Lee, Director of the Center for Foreign Policy Development (DFAIT), and Dr. Edward Osei Kwadwo-Prempeh, Chair of the African Studies Committee, Carleton University.

Mr. Kenny noted that the Conference was taking place at a key moment in Nigeria's history, when the military regime of Abdulsalami Abubakar hands over power to the government of President-elect Olusegun Obasanjo. The Canadian government has a role to play in Nigeria's democratic transformation by supporting the country's return to civilian rule both bilaterally and through international fora. The hand-over date of May 29th, 1999 is a key moment. The Conference's purpose is therefore 1) to assess the post-election social and political environment in Nigeria, and 2) to create clear recommendations for Canada's foreign policy on Nigeria. It brings together key representatives of Nigerian civil society, Canadian agencies and research institutions, and representatives of DFAIT and CIDA.

The keynote address, on "Creating a Political Environment that Encourages Civil Society Participation in Governance", was given by Dr. M.T. Akobo, Director of the Southern Minorities Movement, on behalf of Dr. Beko Ransome-Kuti, Chair of the Campaign for Democracy in Nigeria.

Dr. Akobo thanked the Canadian government for its principled stand in withdrawing its mission from Nigeria during the Abacha regime. He detailed some of the breakdowns in the economy, infrastructure and employment that have become steadily worse in recent years. Noting the present initiative to return to civilian rule via a transitional Government of National Unity, he expressed the hope that it would lead to a Sovereign National Conference which could renegotiate the constitution and provide the basis for democratic elections. He identified several contentious issues which need to be negotiated between north and south as well as between major nationalities and minorities, such as: restructuring the country and its institutions; resource allocation; and systems of government, including division of powers. Dr. Akobo concluded by calling for increased civil society participation in government to restore confidence and enable a new negotiated constitution to be developed.

Sandelle Scrimshaw, Director General of the Africa Bureau for DFAIT, responded to Dr. Akobo's remarks. [See Appendix D for Ms. Scrimshaw's prepared statement.]

#### IV. Assessing the Emergent Political Environment

Papers by Ms. Toun Ilumoka of the Empowerment and Action Research Center in Lagos, and Prof. Peter Ekeh of the S.U.N.Y. were presented.

Ms. Ilumoka's presentation was entitled "Assessing Civil Society after the Military: New Opportunities, Continuing Constraints". She discussed the concept of civil society, its development and its variants in Nigeria under the military rule of the Babangida and Abacha administrations. Initially, to combat the brutality of the state, very different kinds of groups amalgamated or formed coalitions to develop a common basic minimum program of action. However, because institutionalized groups such as workers, teachers and students had been deliberately weakened by the state, attempts to confront the military administrations were largely unsuccessful. Ms. Ilumoka suggested that civil society should go beyond mere reaction and opposition. It has to pro-actively articulate an agenda for social transformation. It must plan and strategize to respond effectively to the new administration. Therefore, as well as the military's disengagement from politics, the fundamental differences among the various civil society actors must be addressed. Ms. Ilumoka also noted the absence of established rules and enforcement procedures which could be implemented by a broad cross section of society and that the transition was being implemented without a constitution. How then will the new government be held accountable? She asked. Would it truly address the aspirations of the Nigerian people? What will be the role of civil society under the new civilian government? How effectively will groups be able to operate outside the framework of government institutions? All these questions underline the importance of research and agenda-setting institutions, the media and people's organizations, as well as the international community. Finally Ms. Ilumoka, among other things, raised the issue of a sovereign national conference and the development of a constitution that truly represents the democratic aspirations of the Nigerian people. These matters must be addressed, she emphasized. Also paramount are popular economic programs, which can generate support from the various sectors of Nigerian society, and massive investment in education, to strengthen Nigeria's culture of respect for human rights.

Prof. Ekeh offered comments on "Strengthening Democratic Representation in Nigeria: Constitutional Debates, Federalism and Resource Allocation". He provided historical background to the rise of Nigerian federalism, tracing its development from independence in 1960, through the Civil War, to a series of military regimes. Federalism as a logical response to Nigeria's unique make-up after independence was replaced over a period of time by centralized military

control of the regions and their functions. Under military rule, funds from oil revenues were not properly distributed under revised federal systems for allocation of resources. Imposition of new laws such as the Land Use Decree allowed the central military government to impose a formula on the entire country, over-riding former local autonomy in these matters. On a constitutional level, constituent regions lost their autonomous rights in 1979, with subsequent military regimes defending the right to ratify any constitutional changes. In Dr. Ekeh's opinion, all of the above developments had led to alienation, lawlessness and corruption, violence, and militarization in the country. His policy options for reform under a return to civilian rule included: increased attention to the rights of states; limiting the rights of central government; reconfiguration of the Nigerian constitution; and repeal of the Land Use Decree.

## **V. Strategies for Increasing Citizen Participation in Policy Making**

Conference participants discussed how to increase citizen participation in policy making under the transition to civilian rule, and clarified the potential role of Canadian foreign policy in relation to this. Their key observations were as follows:

- Canada can provide key resources in terms of offering advice and expertise on different models of federalism (e.g. what has and hasn't worked in the Canadian context) and how to deal with structural issues of representation and resource allocation. This would support the development of new forms of cooperative federalism in Nigeria.
- Canadian support for constitutional reform processes such as the Sovereign National Conference would provide opportunities for constructive dialogue among diverse elements of Nigerian society. Support for processes to allow the 'bottom-up' construction of policies and constitutional frameworks would also be beneficial.
- Canadian encouragement and support for negotiation and conflict resolution among stakeholders in Nigeria would be a key aid to the democratic transition process, so that fragile political relationships can be strengthened. This could be combined with support for national mobilization of citizens through electoral education activities that counter the 'ethnicization' agenda of some forces in Nigeria.
- Support to enable civil society organizations in different regions of Nigeria to share skills, strategies and resources in a coordinated fashion to



maximize their positive impact on democratization.

- Moral and political pressure to increase the Nigerian government's accountability to its own people and to the international community can be applied through Canada's activities in international bodies such as the Commonwealth and the United Nations. The Harare Declaration can provide a framework for accountability on a multilateral level. Conditionality for Canadian support should hinge around a combination of social, political and economic factors in the transition to democracy. Some conditionality is important to ensure transparency and discourage corruption. If possible, positive conditionality should be stressed.
- The role of the Canadian private sector is key in both the present and future contexts. Constructive private sector investment will help support the transition to democracy and provide alternatives to existing 'bad practices' in international investment in Nigeria.
- Canada's development assistance program through CIDA can provide several integrated levels of support:
  - \* Immediate, tangible, short-term projects in the areas of infrastructure (transportation, communications, and utilities), education, water, and health can help build citizen confidence in the democratic transition.
  - \* Direct, targeted support in poverty alleviation for 'vulnerable groups', particularly women, youth, and minorities in the Niger River delta, were considered immediate priorities.
  - \* Support for judicial/constitutional reform, human rights activities (such as human rights monitoring), and for demilitarization (through such mechanisms as capacity-building to assist the army to play a productive peace-time role) were considered as short- to medium-term priorities.
  - \* CIDA-funded partnerships between Canadian and Nigerian organizations (for example, church and labour groups, NGOs and CBOs) could provide medium- to long-term capacity development for civil society.
- Canadian sponsorship for an in-depth, multi-sectoral country assessment with CIDA and DFAIT support would be a worthwhile effort. This might involve a group of Canadian representatives from a wide range of formal and voluntary sector organizations visiting Nigeria for an extended period to monitor the transition process and report on the potential for

development assistance.

- Canadian aid and development agencies, including CIDA, should work with and through the IFIs to coordinate efforts for Nigerian support.

## **VI. Equity, Distribution and Poverty Alleviation**

Several perspectives were offered on the key questions of equity, distribution and poverty alleviation in the current Nigerian context.

Dr. Ezekiel Uche of the Department of Economics in the University of Maiduguri looked at "Assessing the Nigerian Economy: Growth, Distribution and Poverty Alleviation". He noted that there had been a shift in the predominance of agriculture in the Nigerian economy from the 1960s to the 1970s, when oil revenues increased to the extent that the production of both domestic and export agricultural commodities declined. Economic growth from the oil boom has not been consistent, however, and the economy has been characterized by negative growth rates even with strong oil exports. Mismanagement of oil revenues has led to high inflation rates and the creation of a negative atmosphere for investment. The service and speculative economy has grown but without substantial widespread benefits for economic performance. Inequality in income distribution has increased, leading to dwindling real disposable incomes and rising malnutrition rates. Education and health services have declined. Various poverty indices show clearly that both absolute and relative poverty rates are rising. Current poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria have arisen to cushion effects of structural adjustment since 1986, and to build support for various sectors, but with limited success. Therefore, the elimination of endemic poverty is a key component of the transition to democratic governance models.

Amina Salihu of the Department of Political Science at Ahmadu Bello University presented a paper entitled on "Enhancing Women's Participation in Policy Making: Gender Dimensions and Policy Options". She noted that both Nigeria's colonial history as well as the predominance of patriarchal social structures (reinforced by military rule) has led to the exclusion of women from policy making opportunities. While in theory there are some constitutional guarantees for women's equal participation and representation, in practice gender-sensitive policy analysis is rare. Equity and justice in the allocation of natural resources should therefore pay particular attention to women. Inclusion of women in the policy process could include promotion of affirmative action for women, projects to support women's special initiatives, equal employment opportunities in the private sector, better access to information, and support for

women's community-based organizations.

Nnimmo Bassey, Director of Environmental Rights Action in Nigeria, offered his thoughts on "Democratic Transformation in Nigeria: Canadian Foreign Policy Options". This paper situated the current political situation in Nigeria within the continuing tension to sustain civil society and the environment in the face of natural resource exploitation, specifically oil extraction. Mr. Bassey outlined the efforts of various NGOs and CBOs to resist the activities of both central government and multinational corporations in the Niger Delta, particularly around land use and protection of the natural environment. The paper noted the negative impact of the Petroleum Act and the Land Use Act in the affected areas, and stated that non-enforcement of the Environmental Protection Act by the central government is partly due to its dependence on foreign oil revenues to pay down foreign debt. Various local peoples' demands have included: recognition of local sovereignty over resources; repeal of central laws that govern the extraction of resources in unfair ways; and promotion of means for peaceful co-existence among affected communities. Instances of cultural, social and political resistance were highlighted. Empowerment of civil society organizations working on environmental and local self-determination issues was put forward as a key strategic area, along with improved local development efforts to improve the quality of life for those affected.

A private sector perspective on economic and political transition in Nigeria was provided by Donna Kennedy-Glans of Canadian Occidental Petroleum, a company that currently owns some Nigerian oil concessions. She stressed that investment in this sector necessitates a 20 to 30 year time frame, so that NGO and corporate objectives for Nigeria need to be reconciled in a cooperative manner. Companies like Canadian Oxy have to assess investment opportunities and think about how to manage them in future. As a 'second layer' Canadian investor with relatively small holdings, the situation has to be monitored closely. The corporation has created a code of ethics to govern their investment decisions, which has been adopted by other Canadian companies. The code mentions human rights specifically. In Nigeria, consultations have been held with a variety of stakeholder groups to discuss the feasibility of the code, resulting in specific strategies for community health and safety. Gas flaring has been a particular concern. The issue of 'complicity' in human rights abuses has been a key issue for the corporation, therefore they have tried to inform themselves and also positively influence other key corporations regarding best practices. Canadian Oxy shares some operating agreements with larger multinationals, and it carries out dialogue with these companies about their practices. In fact, some corporate partners have been rejected due to their practices. Issues such

as the need for stricter environmental regulations, how to build trust with representative local communities and partners, the benefits derived from oppressive laws, and the need for independent monitoring of the corporation's application of its code of ethics were all stated to be of concern to Canadian Oxy.

## **VII. Strategies for Enhancing Sustainability**

Group discussions identified several key issues around which foreign policy and aid work would have to be sustained over a period of time to ensure a smooth transition to democratic structures and processes in Nigeria. The table (see overleaf) gives a summary of how such efforts might be organized.

Other specific issues or sectors mentioned for long-term sustainability but not dealt with in detail included agriculture, education, food security, and health.

## **VIII. Developing a Monitoring Mechanism**

Given the transitional context in which Canadian foreign policy and aid will potentially operate in Nigeria, the learning or feedback role of monitoring is very important. Suggestions from the Conference participants included:

- On-going information-gathering by the Working Group on Nigeria in order to keep the Canadian government and public informed. This would be assisted by close links with NGOs and other civil society partners in Nigeria.
- An annual conference or consultation among key Canadian and Nigerian stakeholders to assess progress to date and policy adjustments needed.
- Internships for learning or research with Nigerian organizations for Canadian researchers, activists, and development workers.
- Working Group members to provide briefings and debriefings for CIDA and DFAIT staff in mission preparation and follow-up. For example, the CIDA mission to Nigeria is planned for July 1999, so the Working Group could provide some analysis of their recommendations when they are released in October 1999.

In the long-term, a capacity-assessment plan for the democratization process could be developed giving more precise modalities and processes for on-going

**TABLE: VII: Strategies for Enhancing Sustainability**

Sector/Issue	Why (rationale)	What/How (efforts required to enhance sustainability)	Who (stakeholders and key actors)
Economy	Alleviate immediate and on-going needs, in order to provide for credibility and hope in the transition process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- basic health</li> <li>- education</li> <li>- water</li> <li>- agricultural revival</li> <li>- cottage industries</li> <li>- micro-credit</li> <li>- efforts to recover wealth stolen by previous regimes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- private sector</li> <li>- CIDA</li> <li>- Canadian government (in coordination with multilaterals such as Unicef and UNDP)</li> <li>- NGOs</li> <li>- IDRC (research)</li> <li>- G7 (re: debt relief and wealth recovery)</li> </ul>
Gender	Demarginalize more than half the population, enable them to become active citizens and to participate in the political process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- capacity-building</li> <li>- income generation</li> <li>- advocacy</li> <li>- citizenship education</li> <li>- affirmative action</li> <li>- reproductive health initiatives</li> <li>- basic social support</li> <li>- mainstreaming gender in decision-making processes</li> <li>- gender awareness programs</li> <li>- respect for gender perspectives and policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CIDA</li> <li>- DFAIT</li> <li>- NGOs</li> <li>- private sector</li> </ul>
Sector/Issue	Why (rationale)	What/How (enhance sustainability)	Who (stakeholders, key actors)
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desperate conditions and total disenfranchisement of many local communities.</li> <li>- Management of resources and the environment that respects peoples' needs and involves them in local environmental management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- capacity-building</li> <li>- income generation</li> <li>- legislative reform</li> <li>- land reform</li> <li>- mainstreaming of environment in the policy process</li> <li>- conflict resolution (particularly Niger Delta)</li> <li>- demilitarization</li> <li>- encouraging dialogue</li> <li>- monitor implementation of codes of conduct</li> <li>- promotion of good business values</li> <li>- strong knowledge base</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CIDA</li> <li>- DFAIT</li> <li>- private sector</li> <li>- NGOs</li> <li>- IDRC</li> </ul>
Media and Communications	- Support and sustain a free media environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- encourage peoples' participation in media and communications</li> <li>- media and communication policy reform</li> <li>- education on role of media in a democratic society</li> </ul>	as above

monitoring.

In relation to monitoring, the Working Group would have to define its appropriate role. In some cases, it would monitor the possible changes needed for successful and effective implementation of Canadian foreign policy and aid initiatives. This would hopefully lead to 'process improvement'. The Working Group would also serve as a contact point for those within Nigeria seeking to give feedback on the effects of Canadian foreign policy initiatives.

## **IX. Summary of Key Recommendations for Canadian Foreign Policy and Aid**

Several guiding principles or themes emerged during the course of the Conference around which to organize Canadian foreign policy in Nigeria:

- It is important to support actions which will reinforce the transition to democracy. Key elements of this transition such as human rights and the rule of law might dictate which actions are appropriate to take. At the same time that the Nigerian government is held accountable to broader international human rights instruments, localized 'basic needs' development efforts can take place.
- Opposition to military government and any renewed efforts towards a military coup should be a key policy position of the Canadian government. If transition efforts break down, the Canadian government can play a 'brokering' role to bring together opposing elements in Nigerian society. Any negotiation efforts will themselves provide an excellent example in support of good governance and the democratic process.
- Sustainability of the transition to democracy can be assured through reconstruction efforts dedicated to economic stabilization and poverty alleviation.
- The Canadian government should maintain a fluid, iterative approach to on-the-ground developments in Nigeria during the transition process. This should include immediate reaction to any negative developments on the Niger Delta, including opposing any attempts towards militarization. Efforts should be made to encourage the Nigerian government to increase dialogue with local advocacy and political groups in sensitive areas.
- Support for the role of the Canadian private sector by the Canadian

government could include creation of an environment conducive to private sector investment in support of reconstruction. NGO and private sector partnerships are of primary importance, especially in areas such as energy, forestry, engineering and consulting. Tools and guidelines to help Canadian companies invest in Nigeria should be developed. Foreign aid and investment/trade efforts should be mutually complimentary. Canadian business can play a leverage role with multinational companies to build confidence and address investment issues such as respect for human rights.

- External mediation by Canadians of the constitutional reform process could be a 'value-added' feature of Canadian foreign policy. Support for the Sovereign National Conference will create the right 'optics' and show broader support for transition at the political level.
- Efforts to strengthen civil society through Canadian aid or partnerships can situate basic needs projects (water, health, education) within a broader context of social empowerment. This might include efforts towards economic reform at both the micro- and macro-levels, such as support for a 'peoples' economy'. Simple, basic developmental inputs could help create a 'climate of hope' towards a new era in Nigeria, so that the Canadian role is simultaneously to promote leverage within IFIs for debt relief, support grassroots economic empowerment initiatives, and help broker a constitutional reform process.
- Long-term support for reform of the judiciary, the police, and the military (through such mechanisms as the Military Training Assistance Program) would eventually reinforce sound economic management and democratic development.

The tables beginning overleaf indicate the rationale and potential for Canada's role by summarizing the key recommendations for Canadian foreign policy raised by the Conference.

**Table: IX. Summary of Key Recommendations for Canadian Foreign Policy**

<b>ISSUE SET ONE</b>				
<b>Issues</b>	<b>Why</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Who</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Addressing basic needs within a process of empowerment (economic and political).</li> <li>- Capacity-building of Nigerian NGOs and CBOs.</li> <li>- Advocacy to enable Nigerian citizens and communities to hold politicians and political bodies accountable and responsive to their needs, and to enable citizens to actively contribute to policy-making.</li> </ul>	<p>A strong civil society is bedrock on which democracy is built, through active citizen participation.</p> <p>Why Canada?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is possible to build on demonstrated and proven work already in progress (DDFN).</li> <li>- Canadian civil society is actively engaged in support to Nigerian civil society, through WGN and partnerships. There is potential for more partnerships and shared Nigerian-Canadian experiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Civic education involving rights and responsibilities, issues of accountability, participation, equality, issues to promote peoples participation, contribution to policy as opposed to obedience to hierarchy.</li> <li>- Education to promote tolerance and respect for difference, pluralism, and a culture of debate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Connect to progressive Nigerian NGOs with an empowerment focus and grounded in the base of Nigerian society.</li> <li>- Funding integrated programs of community development and empowerment.</li> <li>- Promotion of Commonwealth, G7, and UN capacity-building of Nigerian civil society.</li> <li>- Focusing on the sectors of Nigerian society that tend to be most marginalized: e.g. according to geographic sector, gender and age.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CIDA through Bilateral and other programs</li> <li>- Canadian NGOs through direct programs</li> <li>- Canada Fund</li> </ul>
<b>ISSUE SET TWO</b>				
<b>Issues</b>	<b>Why</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Who</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Federalism -- reform the structure for allocation of power, responsibilities, and resources</li> <li>- Human Rights -- ensure application and respect for the Harare Declaration and other international documents</li> </ul>	<p>Constitutional reform is the key to a sustainable and effective political system.</p> <p>Why Canada?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Relevant experience in constitutional reform in Canada.</li> <li>- Experienced and interested Canadian individuals and organizations to serve as resource people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Civil society involvement: taking constitutional issues to the people at local levels through engaging civil society in constitutional debate, and support to building capacity of civil society to participate (e.g. drawing on models used in Kenya and Zimbabwe)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conditionality and incentives: in terms of Canadian bilateral policies and support for the Sovereign National Conference; in international fora such as G7, Commonwealth, the UN, multilateral institutions, etc.</li> <li>- Sharing experiences and resources: engaging in issues by Canadians and Canadian government (such as the Federations Forum) with Nigerian institutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CIDA</li> <li>- Canadian NGOs and institutions</li> <li>- DFAIT</li> </ul>



<b>ISSUE SET THREE</b>				
<b>Issues</b>	<b>Why</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Who</b>
<p>- Sustainable communities that include vital environmental and cultural elements, within the context of renewed federalism and respect for minority rights.</p>	<p>Peace, security and stability, through empowerment of previously marginalized regions (e.g. the Niger Delta) where environmental issues are linked to social and political empowerment.</p> <p>Why Canada?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Environmental expertise, through public agencies and private sector companies.</li> <li>- Strong business interests linked to primary resource investment.</li> <li>- Strong NGO relationships with Nigerian environmental issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pilot projects that create a "laboratory for learning" in environmental and social issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Capacity-building for communities, institutions, and international organizations.</li> <li>- Training and education by both Nigerian and Canadian resource people and institutions.</li> <li>- Participatory and formal research on local and national environmental issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nigerian and Canadian research institutions and universities</li> <li>- Canadian and Nigerian private sector</li> <li>- Local and Canadian NGOs</li> <li>- Local CBOs in Nigeria</li> </ul>
<b>ISSUE SET FOUR</b>				
<b>Issues</b>	<b>Why</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Who</b>
<p>Building democratic legal and judicial institutions that respect the rule of law.</p>	<p>Key to sustaining the transition and building democracy.</p> <p>Why Canada?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Experience in Haiti and elsewhere with military and police reform.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prison reform.</li> <li>- Demilitarization and professionalization of the military.</li> <li>- Human rights institutions such as the Human Rights Commission and Ombudsman.</li> <li>- Media as a watch dog for corruption.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training and capacity building by Canadians.</li> <li>- Financial support to NGOs to create watch dog agencies.</li> <li>- Codes of conduct for international commerce, trade and investment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- DFAIT</li> <li>- Department of Defense</li> <li>- Canadian police and military</li> <li>- Legal professionals and experts in human rights law</li> <li>- Canadian NGOs with appropriate expertise e.g. Elizabeth Fry Society, John Howard Society, Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, etc.</li> </ul>



## **Appendix A: Conference Participants**

### **Presenters and Resource Persons**

M.T. Akobo, Southern Minorities Movement, Nigeria  
Amina Salihu, Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria  
Nnimmo Bassey, Mr. Nnimmo Bassey, Environmental Rights Action, Nigeria  
Peter Ekeh, S.U.N.Y., New York, USA  
Toun Ilumoka, Empowerment & Action Research Centre, Nigeria  
Donna Kennedy-Glans, Canadian Occidental Petroleum, Ltd., Calgary  
Wishart Robson, Canadian Occidental Petroleum, Ltd., Calgary

### **Government-Related**

Gerry Ohlsen, Privy Council Office, Ottawa  
Sandelle Scrimshaw, DFAIT, Ottawa  
Geoff Charlebois, DFAIT, Ottawa  
Robert Foote, CIDA, Ottawa  
Joe Stern, Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ottawa  
Jonathan Arnold, CIDA, Ottawa  
Stephen Lee, Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, Ottawa  
Marketa Deisler, Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, Ottawa

### **Canadian Institutions and Agencies**

Ola Smith, International Development Research Centre  
G. Stuart Adam, Carleton University, Ottawa  
Edward OseiKwado-Prempeh, Carleton University, Ottawa  
Douglas Anglin, Carleton University, Ottawa

### **Working Group on Nigeria**

Pablo Idahosa, York University, Toronto  
Walter McLean, Presbyterian Church in Canada, Toronto  
Lucie Leveille, International Centre for HR and Democratic Development,  
Montreal  
Gary Kenny, Inter Church Coalition on Arica, Toronto  
Collins Babalola, Common Cause, Ottawa  
D. English, Common Cause, Ottawa  
Trevor Cook, Canadian Catholic Organization for Development & Peace,  
Montreal

Kenna Owoh, Inter-Church Action, Toronto  
Pierre Beaudet, Alternatives, Montreal  
Owens Wiwa, Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People, Toronto  
Pat Williams, Working Group on Nigeria, Toronto  
John Van Mossel, Working Group on Nigeria, Ottawa  
Kole Shettima, Working Group on Nigeria, Toronto  
Devon Curtis, Forum of Federations, Ottawa  
Sr. Ann Marie Enzenwa, Working Group on Nigeria, Ottawa  
M. Ohlsen, Ottawa  
Christiana Show-Sawyer, Carleton University, Ottawa  
Eniola Akitan, Carleton University, Ottawa  
William Abayomi, Common Cause, Ottawa

### Facilitators and Recorders

- 39. Lise Latroumouille, facilitator
- 40. Anne Gillies, recorder

## Appendix B: Conference Agenda

### Conference: "Democratic Transformation in Nigeria: Canadian Foreign Policy Options"

14<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> April, 1999

Carleton University, Ottawa  
20<sup>th</sup> Floor, Dunton Tower

#### Proposed Agenda

April 14

9:00 a.m.

#### Welcome and Opening Remarks

Gary Kenny, Chair, Working Group on Nigeria  
Stephen Lee, Director, Centre for Foreign Policy Development  
Dr. G. Stuart Adam, V-P Academic, Carleton University

**Key Note Address:** "Creating a Political Environment that Encourages Civil Society Participation in Governance" Dr. M.T. Akobo, Director, Southern Minorities Movement on behalf of Dr. Beko Ransome-Kuti, Chairperson, Campaign for Democracy

**DFAIT Response:**

"Strengthening Canadian/Nigerian Relations" Ms. Sandelle Scrimshaw, Director General, Africa Bureau, DFAIT

10:30 a.m.

*BREAK*

11:00 a.m.

#### Plenary: Assessing the Emergent Political Environment

1. "Assessing Civil Society after the Military: New Opportunities, Continuing Constraints" - Ms. Toun Ilumoka, Empowerment and Action Research Centre, Lagos, Nigeria

2. "Strengthening Democratic Representation: Constitutional Debates, Federalism, Resource Allocation" - Prof. Peter Ekeh, S.U.N.Y., New York, USA

12:00 p.m.

*LUNCH*

1:00 p.m.

**Small Group Discussions: Strategies for Increasing Citizen Participation in Policy Making**

1:30 p.m.

**Plenary: Report back**

2:45 p.m.

*BREAK*

3:00 p.m.

**Plenary: Discussion and Recommendations**

5:00 p.m. **ADJOURN**

**April 15**

- 9:00 a.m. **Plenary: Equity, Distribution and Poverty Alleviation**  
4. "Assessing the Nigerian Economy: Growth, Distribution, Social Implications, Eradication of Poverty" - Dr. Ezekiel Uche, University of Maiduguri, Borno State  
5. "Canadian Commercial Interests in Nigeria: Opportunities, Responsibilities, Constraints" - Ms. Donna Kennedy-Glans, Canadian Occidental Petroleum  
6. "Enhancing Women's Participation in Policy Making: Gender Dimensions and Policy Options" - Ms. Amina Salihu, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria  
7. "Sustaining Civil Life and the Environment" - Mr. Nnimmo Bassey, Environmental Rights Action, Nigeria
- 10:15 a.m. **BREAK**
- 10:30 a.m. **Small Group Discussion: Strategies for Enhancing Sustainability**
- 12:00 p.m. **LUNCH**
- 1:00 p.m. **Plenary: Report Back**
- 2:00 p.m. **Plenary: Discussion and Recommendations**
- 3:15 p.m. **BREAK**
- 3:30 p.m. **Plenary: Refining Options in the Short and Long-term**
- 5:00 p.m. **Plenary: Developing a Monitoring Mechanism**
- 5:45 p.m. **Synthesis/Conclusions**
- 6:00 p.m. **CLOSURE - Thanks to all guests and participants**

## **Appendix C: Conference Papers (full text)**

**Key note address:** "Creating a Political Environment that Encourages Civil Society Participation in Governance", delivered by Dr. M.T. Akobo, Director of the Southern Minorities Movement, on behalf of Dr. Beko Ransome-Kuti, Chair of the Campaign for Democracy in Nigeria.

"Strengthening Democratic Representation in Nigeria: Constitutional Debates, Federalism and Resource Allocation", Prof. Peter Ekeh, S.U.N.Y. , New York.

"Assessing Civil Society after the Military: New Opportunities, Continuing Constraints". Ms. Toun Ilumoka, Empowerment and Action Research Center, Lagos, Nigeria

"Assessing the Nigerian Economy: Growth, Distribution, Social Implications, Eradication of Poverty", Dr. Ezekiel Uche, University of Maiduguri, Nigeria

"Enhancing Women's Participation in Policy Making: Gender Dimensions and Policy Options", Ms. Amina Salihu, Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria

"Sustaining Civil Life and the Environment", Mr. Nmimmo Basse, Environmental Rights Action in Nigeria, Nigeria

**KEY NOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE CONFERENCE  
"DEMOCRATIC TRANSFORMATION IN NIGERIA:  
CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY OPTIONS"  
HELD IN OTTAWA, CANADA ON APRIL 14 & 15, 1999  
by Dr. Beko Ransome-Kuti**

**CREATING A POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT THAT ENCOURAGES CIVIL  
SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE**

First, I want to acknowledge the courageous and noble role that the government and people of Canada played in the struggles of Nigerians for democracy during the dark days of the Abacha regime. Canada could always be counted upon both inside Nigeria and in the international forum. Its leadership role in the Commonwealth in championing the cause of democracy stood out as a shining example. It is also on record that Canada was the only country that took the principled stand of withdrawing its mission from Nigeria in spite of great disadvantage and inconvenience to its interests. We cannot forget how Canada gave the beleaguered human rights and pro-democracy groups all possible support. We also cannot thank the Canadian people enough for the kindness they have shown to Nigerians who managed to find their way to these shores while fleeing from all kinds of danger at home. We hope we shall be able to repay you if only by improving our society at home by that little bit.

A few days' visit to Nigeria will convince any observer that the centre can no longer hold. The basic infrastructures have almost collapsed. There are only very few places where tap water can be obtained at any time. Electricity supply, which was haphazard at best, is now becoming a rarity. It is not unknown for electricity supply to be cut off and restored ten times in one day. There are places where they have not had electricity for up to three months.

Nigeria, which happens to be the world's ninth largest oil producer, cannot supply its petroleum needs. There have been daily queues at petrol stations, stretching for kilometres in some places. While this is going on, the four refineries in the country have broken down due to lack of basic maintenance. The Ministers of Finance and Petroleum traded accusations in public as to the whereabouts of the money meant for this purpose. Attempts to import petrol to meet the shortfall were also mismanaged due to corruption and nepotism. Meanwhile, the price of petrol keeps shooting up - from 20k per litre in 1986 to N20 in 1998. That is a 10,000-fold increase.

The economy has not fared better. Unemployment is rampant and has been as



high as 60%. There have been numerous factory closures and those that manage to stay afloat are running at capacities as low as 25%. Even at that rate, inventories remain extremely high due to very low purchasing power of the general public. The dual exchange rate, which was only recently ended, allowed army officers, government officials, their families and friends to buy foreign exchange at N22 for a US dollar and immediately sell at N80, making astronomical profits - sometimes without leaving the premises of the bank. Our foreign debt remain around US\$30 billion in spite of Abacha's Finance Minister's spurious claim sometime ago that he had almost paid it off.

Consultants and the resident doctors in the Teaching Hospitals have been on strike for almost two months and the Minister of Health is not particularly worried. The government seems more interested in hosting a soccer fiesta - the World Soccer Youth Championships. It has made arrangements with the world football association, FIFA for the treatment of any injured footballer abroad; apparently unworried about its own injured or ill citizen. Fake drugs flood the country and doctors wonder whether they are still relevant.

Though Alhaji Shagari's civilian government was extremely corrupt, it's misdemeanours pale into insignificance when compared with what occurred during Gen. Babangida's term (the \$12.5 billion Gulf war windfall that accrued to Nigeria is still being looked for amongst his baggage). The mind boggles as we continue to listen to the disclosures by the Abubakar regime of massive sums that had been looted and are now being recovered from members of Gen. Abacha's family, officers, ministers and friends. Yet the culprits remain free. On the other hand, there are scores of senior banking officials who have been held in custody for upwards of four years on the allegation that they gave out unsecured loans.

The army, which has been involving itself in the governance since 1966 on the claims that it came to save Nigeria from bad governance, has become the greatest obstacle to a peaceful progressive polity. It has enthroned corruption as a national culture, has created disharmony so much that Nigerians have become ethnic-centred. It has driven the economy aground, destroyed the judiciary and has made basic infrastructure look like facilities that can be enjoyed only by the most advanced community at the end of the coming century. Of course the social services such as health, housing, transport, clean drinking water are things that can only be enjoyed by the very wealthy.

Everyone, including members of the armed forces, are now convinced it was time they left governance permanently. It is however unfortunate that the present

Nigerian Army is highly ethnicised and has similarly ethnicised the whole country. It has been impossible for it to organise a credible transition programme. The only apparently successful 1979 transition could not be sustained for more than four years. It is for this reason that the proposal was made that the army should hand over to a Government of National Unity (GNU) while the army returned to the barracks. The main job of the GNU is to convene a Sovereign National Conference (SNC) of representatives of all nationalities and other civil society actors where the multifarious problems of the country can be discussed and the basis of our co-existence can be negotiated and agreed. Elections will then follow based on the negotiated document.

It is no use asking how the GNU will be formed or who will lead it or what the composition will be. It is also no use asking the same questions about the SNC. It is the principle that matters. Chief M.K.O. Abiola, who had won an election with massive majorities in all parts of the country, the fairness of which no one disputed, was not allowed to take up his mandate. He was the best friend of both the military and the northern elite and a Moslem to boot. That singular event provided convincing evidence that the North was not willing to associate with other Nigerians on an equal basis. What it also did was to show that the Nigerian army is a northern army. Events since then, including the phantom coup of 1995, the nationality of most of those imprisoned or held under Decree 2 or those driven into exile or those set-up in the 1997 coup reinforce this view.

The death of Gen. Abacha, the apparent benevolence of Gen. Abubakar, the zoning of the presidency to the Southwest does not alter these facts. They are palliatives to impose solutions without negotiations or consultations with the other party. It is therefore unfortunate that that the series of elections arranged by Gen. Abubakar with all its imperfections is being applauded by the international community as a return to democracy.

### ***The Constitution***

Up till now, Nigeria does not have a constitution and Gen. Abubakar continues to run things on an ad-hoc basis. One area where the participation of the civil society in governance is crucial is certainly Constitution making because this lays down the basic rules under which all of us will live. It cannot be left to Gen. Abubakar as it was left to his military predecessors including Gen. Obasanjo in 1979. Usually when the military imposes the constitution, it decrees no-go areas that could not be debated in the Constituent Assembly and also reserve to themselves the final amendment and approval of the Constitution. Arranging a referendum appears to

be given to much latitude to civil society.

If the Constitution being put together by Gen. Abubakar is made into a cast-iron document that can only be amended by the usual difficult process of obtaining 2/3 agreement in various Houses of Assembly one can see major problems ahead.

### ***Suggestions for the Way Forward***

There are a number of contentious issues. These include the need to re-structure the country and its institutions, resource allocation and the system of government. There is a great divide on these issues between the north and the south, between the major nationalities and the minorities.

One also imagines that when the Abubakar Constitution is published it will contain the usual high proportion of votes that need to be obtained before his constitution can be amended. In the Federal House of Representatives, there is an in-built majority in favour of the North with 191 legislators to 176 for the South. Since most of the changes being demanded are those that will alter the pro-north status quo, this is not a route that looks promising.

### ***A) Interim Constitution***

There has been suggestions that the present set-up by Gen. Abubakar should be considered an interim arrangement and the constitution he produces should embody a process whereby an indirectly elected Constitution Drafting Assembly composed of various actors in civil society and a cross-section of the various nationalities. After the army has returned to the barracks, this all-inclusive process can then be used to negotiate a proper constitution. The South African constitution-making process is relevant here. The next series of elections will then be held on the new agreed Constitution.

Certain basic fundamental principles must be enshrined in the new Constitution:

- i) *Restructuring of the Country* must be done in such a way that power shifts from the centre to the constituent ethnic nationalities. People must be able to take charge of their lives again.

The fact remains, by any definition one might choose, that Nigeria is an amalgam of different nationalities. Various attempts have been made over the years to tackle the problem of domination of one group by another. At the constitutional conference of 1958, the Willink Commission was set up to address the issue of the fear of the minorities. The recommendations suggested the inclusion in the Constitution of a Bill of Rights and referenda when and where appropriate to determine new regions, amongst other mechanisms that might be employed.

The experience from 1960 however, shows that this is still a burning issue. The creation of more states and local government areas do not seem to have been particularly helpful as there still continues to be a clamour for more. Quota system, ethnic balancing, federal character and similar mechanisms rather than ameliorate the problem seem to have exacerbated it as the dominating group seem to be using these selectively to advance its own agenda.

In the recent Conference of Nationalities held last December in Lagos where many nationalities were represented along with other civil society actors it was unanimously agreed that:

"Ethnic Nationalities shall be the building blocks of the Federation, with the right to self-determination The Federating units shall have powers comparable to the Regions in the 1963 constitution and they shall have their own constitutions."

ii) *Revenue Allocation* has to be carried out on the basis of what is needed to run each tier of government depending on the powers allocated to it. Derivation has to play a prominent role. This is not only to sustain the goose that lays the golden egg but also to make sure that parasitic region formations are not encouraged.

Before the coming of the army in 1966, the 1960 Independence and 1963 Republican Constitutions allocated revenue on the basis of derivation: 50% of the revenue went to the area from which it was extracted while 50% went to the Federal government. Out of this, the Federal government was only allowed to retain 20% while 30% went into the distributable pool which went to the regions including the region of origin which had previously got its 50% share. It is important to note that the Constitution defined a region to include the continental shelf abutting the region.

The various military governments have distorted this negotiated principle to vest most of the mineral rights in the Federal government giving back little or nothing to the areas of derivation. However, the environmental despoliation of the oil producing areas has escalated over the years. The obvious development in other areas of the country and the visible corruption and embezzlement of this resources by various individuals has brought this issue to a critical boiling point. Some of the indigenes of the oil-producing areas are up in arms and lots of peoples both nationally and internationally sympathise with them. Instead of trying to solve their problems, the response has been the military occupation of their homes, raping of their women and the hanging and killing of their people.

iii) *Restructuring of the Institutions* - All institutions, especially the army, should be subject to civilian control.

a) The Police - should be de-centralised and should be controlled by the local authority and not the centre as it is now.

b) The Army - A new National Army should be put in place with Regional Commands. These commands should ensure that the membership of the troops under their control consists of a substantial number of indigenes.

This recommendation is borne out of the fact that the present Nigerian Army is generally perceived as a Northern Army consistently and persistently pushing a northern agenda. Breaking the army into regional commands will make the planning of coups and other nefarious activities difficult to sustain.

iii) *Establishment of Independent Commissions* with wide powers to investigate and prosecute cases should be set up. Efforts should also be made to ensure that their funding couldn't be manipulated to strangle them. These should include:

a) Inspector General of Government (Ombudsman): He would have powers to investigate any complaints or lapses in any government department. Senior government functionaries will declare their assets, which will be accessible to the public on demand.

b) National Human Rights Commission will take complaints from the public. It may also take up cases at its own initiative.

c) Anti-Corruption Commission will deal with any cases of corruption brought to its notice or at its own initiative

d) Electoral Commission - The membership of the Commission should reflect a balance of interest in the political parties, civil society actors and geographical spread.

To encourage civil society participation in governance, confidence has to be restored. At the moment, people believe that unless the system changes and power is devolved and people can take responsibilities for their lives depending on their culture and vision, the experiment called Nigeria may not be a worthwhile exercise.

We urge our friends to encourage and support those who work for a negotiated Constitution in Nigeria and not one that is imposed, manipulated or engineered. We also hope efforts will be made to do what they can to nudge those who are afraid of negotiations to see reason. It is not reasonable to expect a people to exchange external colonialism with internal colonialism. A popular Constitution arrived at by an all-inclusive process involving all sections of the polity after the

necessary consensus is the only way to create a stable and progressive Nigeria which will deter the army and encourage civil society to participate in governance.

### QUESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

- (1) How do you resolve the issue of Resource Allocation in a multi-national or multi-ethnic country like Nigeria?
- (2) How do you form a consensus on a Constitution when one side believes a free debate will result in the break-up of the country?
- (3) Good governance is not an antidote to coups, so how do we prevent coups in Nigeria?
- (4) How do you bring to justice those who have perpetrated serious crimes such as assassination, torture, bombings and looting of the country? Can you use the international tribunal mechanism or the Pinochet system to address this issue?
- (5) How can the performance of the government be assessed and evaluated as regards good governance etc.? What are the benchmarks?

# **ASSESSING CIVIL SOCIETY AFTER THE MILITARY: NEW OPPORTUNITIES, CONTINUING CONSTRAINTS**

by  
**Adetoun Ilumoka**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Although Nigeria has been ruled by military leaders for thirty of its thirty nine years of existence since independence, the extensive partnership between the military and sections of the civilian elite as well as the poor record of civilian regimes, make it somewhat problematic to view the military or military rule as a distinctive landmark in the history of the country. It is true that military rule has contributed significantly to the legitimization of violence in politics and governance, but the current widespread anti military ethos and feeling of relief and hope as Nigerian military rulers prepare to hand over to civilians, owes more to the atrocities and reign of terror unleashed by the Babangida and Abacha regimes than to anything else.

The extremes of this period triggered an equally significant reaction from various interest groups and sections of society, and it is in the light of the experience of organising against a repressive and unrepresentative government, that it is timely and important for both "civil society groups" and their international supporters and allies to assess the situation for the future, after the military. This paper examines the concept of "Civil Society," its organisation and new opportunities and continuing constraints presented for political and socio-economic development in Nigeria after the military.

What do we mean by "civil society"? This is not a new term but has become very popular in the past five years. It is variously used to juxtapose the military with the civilian populace; the military and civilian "political class" with the rest of the populace (in other words the leadership with the followers); and the State with all other organised groups not directly influenced or sponsored by it. Examples given of such groups range from trade unions, students organisation, religious associations, human rights groups, business and professional associations, women's groups, and even universities and research institutes. The thing that all these definitions seem to have in common is that they define civil society as the people of a geographic location organised as interest or lobby groups.

However, common usage of the term today, goes beyond mere description to ascribe a certain legitimacy to "civil society" over and above the State or governments. It is not clear why the State is so demonised and civil society - usually in the form of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is heralded as the form of organisation for the future, deserving of more support from the international community.

Civil society organisations are of such different types, engaged in such different activities that it really is not useful to lump them together under one umbrella. They include community based organisations such as farmers co-operatives, local credit unions, ethnic town or village unions; mass organisations such as the market women's association and the National Association of Nigerian Students, religious groups, trade unions, professional associations, voluntary charitable

organisations such as the Red Cross, human rights membership organisations such as the Civil Liberties Organisation, professionalised advocacy organisations such as the IAC and Action Health Incorporated and private research centres such as EMPARC. We must acknowledge that they even included Youth Earnestly Ask for Abacha (YEAA). What are these organisations established to do, how do they go about doing it and what will be their impact on society? These are the questions to be asked in assessing civil society. We urgently need to go beyond focusing on the form of these organisations to focusing on their content in terms of goals and strategies.

Out of the experience of military rule and the degenerating situation in the country in the recent past, has come the realisation that democratisation of policy making and implementation and good governance is a pre-requisite for socio-economic development that is people centred. Working towards this goal requires that people demand participation in the exercise of State power. When support is sought for some civil society organisations, and arguments are made for channelling resources to NGOs not governments, are we seeking to support access to State power, or to bypass the State and strengthen "civil society" or to supplant the State with alternative institutions which we think function more efficiently. What is the rationale behind any of these choices?

The dichotomy between the State and the rest of us (civil society) is problematic especially in the context of democratisation. In seeking greater participation of people in governance, we seek to find ways to ensure that the voices and needs of the various interest groups are reflected and met in policies and programmes. The state of civil society must be assessed with a longer term view and a global perspective, for some of the most important landmarks and the watershed predate military rule.

Having sounded this note of caution on the conceptualisation of "Civil Society" and the tendency towards mystification; it is clear that events in the past six years in Nigeria triggered a strong reaction and organisation against authoritarian government and the military, in the light of which prospects for democratisation, socio-economic development and peace and the role and capacity of various interest groups in actualising these goals should be examined.

### **ASSESSING CIVIL SOCIETY IN NIGERIA**

Over the past thirteen years, abuse of state power and the suppression of dissent reached unprecedented heights. Collapse of infrastructure, fuel shortages, vicious repression of dissent in oil producing areas; a clampdown on the media and lawyers taking action against the government; lack of accountability and runaway corruption were all hallmarks of this period.

This occurred simultaneously with the imposition of Structural Adjustment Programmes which resulted in the contraction of local industries; cutbacks in health, education and social services; a widespread retrenchment of workers in the public and private sectors; The premature annulment of the results of an election that had already taken place in 1993 was symbolic of the misuse of State power and the contempt in which the military rulers held the society. Major challenges to government and the arbitrary use of force were posed by the journalists and media houses and lawyers in court. Emerging human rights organisations dominated by lawyers thus became extremely active and popular. The scale of the repression was mirrored to a large extent in the growth of the groups and their membership and support. Following the 1993 elections,



many members of these groups went into exile. During this period of repression, the weaknesses of existing human rights and pro-democracy groups in mass mobilization were apparent and many lessons in organisation were learned. Coalitions were built for greater impact (indeed sometimes of strange bedfellows) and attempts made to develop a common basic minimum programme of action - to get the military out and restructure Nigeria through a sovereign national conference and referendum.

Much reliance was placed on already fairly organised mass groups with an institutional base such as trade unions and students. However, even these groups were significantly weakened and disorganised in this period by government interference and socio-economic pressures. Attempts to appeal to and mobilise these groups and the public at large to demonstrate and oppose the military government, after the initial encouraging responses of 1993 and 1994, were largely unsuccessful. Although the response to public rallies organised by pro-democracy groups in the past two years seemed once more encouraging, the intensity of state violence to suppress these public showings of dissent were so intense that they were often called off or short lived.

Religious groups and leaders spoke out against the regime and sought to influence it. They were largely immune from direct persecution because of their following and legitimacy. Sections of the so-called organised private sector were also vocal about the political crisis in the country and its effects on economic activity.

## NEW OPPORTUNITIES

After the intense build up of organised resistance to the military over the past few years, we can now pose the question of what lessons have been learned by "civil society" in the wake of the reign of terror that will stave off such future acts of tyranny? What new opportunities have the imminent withdrawal of the military from the forefront of political decision making given rise to? One lesson that seems glaring relates to the need for interest groups to build larger and stronger constituencies that can act decisively and influence decision making. The need for these interest groups to go beyond mere reaction and opposition, to articulating an agenda for social transformation in various spheres has also been noted by many pro-democracy activists and commentators. The need for long term vision and planning and strategising, to prevent a repeat performance or similar degeneration of the political situation cannot be over emphasised. It is widely agreed that the current opening up and respite from the reign of terror of the Babangida and Abacha regimes present a modicum of the much needed democratic space to engage in such planning and strategising. What needs to be done to secure and expand that space permanently? What needs to be done to utilise it effectively? For many segments of civil society, the withdrawal of the military and the installation of a civilian regime seems to be the primary goal to be accomplished. Others point out the fragility of the new political dispensation if it does not have the support of the majority of Nigerians. Voices are being raised on the need for resolution of some fundamental issues concerning the basis on which different interest groups interact and participate in this polity called Nigeria. Much of the debate on representation is being expressed as issues of discrimination against ethnic groups, playing down the equally if not more fundamental issues of the interests of other groups not based on ethnicity which some commentators have raised.

## **CONTINUING CONSTRAINTS**

The absence of declared rules and enforcement procedures implementable by a broad section of society is a major problem in Nigeria today which is still not being addressed. The transition process was in effect carried out and "democratic" institutions established without a constitution. Compromises in this regard have been justified on the grounds of the importance of not disrupting military disengagement. What rules then will bind the new government and do they conform to the aspirations of the Nigerian people? The legitimacy of the new government is still at stake and its actions in creating and maintaining a new and broad political consensus will be important. The establishment of a government of National Unity and the convening of a Sovereign National Conference are two of the major strategies that are being advanced. The implications of the current adoption of the 1979 constitution for the pattern of governance in Nigeria remains to be seen in practice. Once a civilian government is sworn in, what will be the role of civil society groups in promoting democracy in Nigeria. Will they continue to advocate change from outside the framework of government institutions? How effectively?

Democratisation and joint agenda setting is as pertinent to civil society groups as it is to governments. The most important groups will be those which have access to information, a strong constituency and are able to mobilise public opinion and action in their favour. This raises the issue of the importance of research and agenda setting institutions, the media, and mass organisations such as trade unions in this process, and the role of the international community. Advocates of a new governance paradigm across and beyond state boundaries, should recognise that civil society organisations are per force already obliged to organise beyond state boundaries because states exist as transnational concentrations of power in particular geographic locations. This is why the issue of sanctions against the Abacha regime - withholding genuine, existing trade, military and other co-operation from tyrants, was raised. Mobilising counter forces in international relations is now a reality. In an era when ex-military leaders are back in power, when ex military leaders, politicians and government officials are establishing NGOs and using public funds for this purpose, we should raise questions about the transfer of lack of accountability in the public sector to the private sector, where it can be made legitimate. We need to refocus on the content and not just the form of civil society organisations.

## **SOME OPTIONS FOR DEMOCRATIC TRANSFORMATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

It has been suggested that in order to re-establish the legitimacy of future governments in Nigeria there must be a sovereign national conference and the development of a constitution that truly represents the aspirations of the various groups in the country. Economic programmes which have the support of a broad section of the populace need to be established through democratic constitutional processes. In view of the collapse of the educational sector, the country also needs a massive investment in developing the quality of her human resources especially in future generations if trends towards crisis are to be averted. This thinking contrasts with

# STRENGTHENING DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION IN NIGERIA: CONSTITUTIONAL DEBATES, FEDERALISM, AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

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## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

### *The Rise and Misfortunes of Nigerian Federalism*

The foundations of modern Nigerian politics were laid in the nineteen-fifties. That decade began with the Ibadan Constitutional Conference of 1950 in which leaders of Northern Nigeria and Southern Nigeria met for the first time in a common political forum since the amalgamation of these two separate British colonies in 1914. It ended with the attainment of Independence in 1960. In the course of that fateful decade, Nigerians got to know themselves a lot. They also worked together to produce a blueprint for the country's political future. In essence, Nigerian leaders forged a consensus, namely, that federalism was the appropriate vehicle for resolving political problems created by the nation's deep-seated circumstances of diversity. The choice of federalism as a mode of governing Nigeria's political affairs was significant for several reasons. First, federalism is rare in Africa. Second, federalism was entirely derived from domestic considerations. Third, federalism was adopted from the exercise of common sense of compromise and accommodation by Nigeria's political leaders from debates involving vast segments of Nigerians.

The intensity of Nigerian federalism of the 1950s could be imagined from the fact that it was driven from below, from the Regions. Nigeria's 1960/63 Constitution illustrates very well the depth of its federalism. It was made up of four constitutional laws (or five, after the creation of Midwest Region in 1964), one for the entire federation and one each for the constituent Regions. The Federal Constitution was negotiated among the constituent political units of the Federation.

### *Nigerian Federalism Under Civil War and the Balance of Yakubu Gowon's Military Reign*

The putsch that ushered Nigeria into military regimes arose from a brutal power struggle in the raw politics of the post-independence years among the three majority ethnic conglomerations (Yoruba, Ibo, and the Hausa-Fulani) for expansion of power outside their regions. In the confusing outcomes of internal

military rivalries that followed the overthrow of civilians, Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi's military regime was bedeviled by a futile attempt to cancel federalism from the Nigerian political process. Yakubu Gowon, who succeeded Aguiyi-Ironsi, learnt the political lessons of federalism well. The natural military impulse towards centralized order was tamed in the early years of military rule by the imperatives of the Nigerian Civil War. In order to prosecute and win that war, the Nigerian Federal Government had to appeal to the regional and ethnic loyalties of minority ethnic groups in southeastern and southwestern Nigeria whose autonomies were threatened by secessionist Biafra. They were indeed told that the Federal Nigerian Government would not do unto them what Biafra was about to do to them -- by assuming their regional powers. Thus, during the Nigerian Civil War federalism grew.

In the aftermath of the Civil War (1970-75), under Yakubu Gowon's continued military rule, federalism flourished. Military governors hailed from their native regions, as it was during Civil War years. They were usually powerful men and ran autonomous governments. For instance, the military government of Midwest Region built the Midwest Institute of Technology (which became University of Benin) despite opposition from Gowon's central government. Similarly, the military governments of Midwest and Rivers jointly embarked on the building of the Warri-Port Harcourt road against expressed opposition from Gowon.

Within the military, however, field officers who fought the war were resentful of the military governors and often berated what they considered to be Gowon's weakness in controlling the Regional military governors. Two of these, Murtala Muhammed and Olusegun Obasanjo, both veterans of the Nigerian Civil War, overthrew Gowon's regime in 1975 in a popular coup d'etat. Muhammed's and Obasanjo's forceful reversals of the powers of the regions virtually canceled federalism from Nigerian governance in a few short years.

#### *Muhammed/Obasanjo's Centralization Mania and the Misfortunes of Nigerian Federalism*

The hard-won principles, processes, and practices of federalism quickly came under attack from Muhammed and Obasanjo. They came to power in good economic times of oil boom in which the economic question was not production but consumption. The Federation Account, set up to regulate the distribution of common funds among the governments of the Federation, became a Federal account controlled by the all-powerful and all-knowing Federal Military Government which overrode existing constitutional formulas for distributing common funds. There was little opposition. A new practice of appointing loyal

and obedient military governors to states other than their own ensured compliance to the dictation from the central military command.

With the death of Muhammed in 1976, Obasanjo became a powerful head of state. During his four years of supremacy, he succeeded mightily in canceling Nigeria's hard-won traditions of federalism. Virtually every institution was centralized: Universities and educational policies were taken over by the Central government. Religion, wisely a regional affair under civilians in the 1950-60s 1950s, fully became a central subject in the Obasanjo years.

#### *Land Use Decree*

The most daring program of centralization under Obasanjo was the so-called Land Use Decree. This was an olden problem dating back to Nigerian colonial history. As part of his mandate for amalgamation (1914-1918), the British colonial officer Frederick Lugard wanted to transfer land usages in Northern Nigeria to the South. The Fulani conquest of Hausa states in 1804-10 had alienated Hausas' lands on the grounds of right of conquest. When the British conquered the Sokoto Caliphate in 1803, they imitated Fulani practices by claiming that the lands of the Caliphate (as elsewhere in the North) now belonged to the British colonial government.

However, in the South, lands belonged to Nigerians, not the government. Lugard's ambition was to extend the smoother land usages in the North to contentious Southern Nigeria. However, in the face of unexpected widespread opposition, Lugard abandoned this scheme of introducing land alienation to Southern Nigeria.

Sixty years later, armed with powers of military rule, Obasanjo's government conquered what Lugard could not master. Empowered by recommendations from a "Land Use Commission," he promulgated Land Use Decree of 1978 by which the practices of the North were now extended to the South. The resentment about this decree in Southern Nigeria is pervasive.

#### *1979 Constitution and Centralization of the Political Process*

In a determined effort to achieve a strong executive presidency in a military-supervised Constitution, Muhammed/Obasanjo sacrificed the principles, practices, and processes of the 1960/63 civilian Constitution in favor of a centralized "federal" Constitution that Muhammed's surviving partner, Obasanjo, fulfilled in 1979 for use by the succeeding civilian government.

The previous civilian Constitution was constructed from below, in the Regions.

By contrast, the 1979 Constitution dictated what the states needed. For instance, in 1960, Eastern Nigeria decided that it did not need a House of Chiefs, whereas both Northern and Western Nigeria opted for this second legislative chamber. In the 1979 Constitution, states have no right to choose what they want. In 1960, the Nigeria Police was to be jointly controlled by the Federal and Regional Governments. Such delicacies have disappeared. Above all, in 1960 every constituent Region had its own Constitution. They lost such rights in 1979.

More threatening to the spirit of the Constitution was the assumption in 1979 by Obasanjo's Supreme Military Council that it had the authority to approve and promulgate the Nigerian Constitution into existence. Subsequent military regimes, including Abdulsami Abubakar's, have since claimed the authority of "ratifying" a Constitution which their agents have constructed. In the process, the states have lost their inherent right to ratify the Constitution.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF CENTRALIZATION AND OF ABUSE OF CONSTITUTION**

Nigeria has not recovered from the constitutional chaos that a series of centralization measures of the 1970s has inflicted on our political traditions. In a sense, Shehu Shagari's (1979-83) civilian regime was foredoomed by the false military standards and expectations that a government had to be tough. It was thrown out by soldiers who upheld the philosophy of centralization. Under their regime federalism has been eviscerated, with painful consequences.

*Alienation:* Most Nigerians are alienated from their governments. With the loss of power by the states and local governments, there are no local autonomies in governance that will empower ordinary individuals and attract them to a government they can relate to. This poverty of governance has been accentuated since the movement of Nigeria's capitals to Abuja widely viewed as a soldiers' fortress.

*Lawlessness and Corruption:* At the heart of military rule in Nigeria is the enthronement of lawlessness. It began its domain in 1966 by suspending the Nigerian Constitution, retaining only those sections that favored its rule. In 1999, the military seeks to end its formal reign after conducting a series of elections in the total absence of a working Constitution. In-between these years Nigeria has been governed without any constitutional order. Corruption thrives because the moral foundations of law have been destroyed by the military.

*Violence:* Violence has become widespread in large part because it is the means by which the business of government is conducted. Lacking authority, government relies on violence which ordinary people imitate.

*Civil-Military Relations:* With nearly thirty years of military rule, Nigerian political processes, the economy, and even our social structure have become militarized. Transition from military rule to civil and democratic rule has not been accompanied by any measures of demilitarization, in large part because the military establishment has insisted on assuming responsibility for preparing for democracy a nation it has forcibly ruled.

*Civilianization:* Our post-military affairs have been ready-made for the prolongation of de facto military rule. It is the bold-faced assumption that the affairs of the post-military state can only be effectively managed by the former military rulers that constitutes the essence of the theory of civilianization. It is under its imperative that Olusegun Obasanjo has been elected President of Nigeria. This theory involves far more than the transformation of military rulers into pseudo-civilian leaders. More dangerously, it permits the operation of centralized structures and processes that empowered military rule to continue into post-military civil politics. That is how West Africa has become infamous for being a zone of civilianized regimes in Ghana, Benin, Togo, Gambia, and now Nigeria.

## POLICY OPTIONS

The political and constitutional questions facing civilianized President Obasanjo cannot be clearer. Will he return to the path of more centralization? Or will he return Nigeria to its beloved federalism which military rule has all but destroyed?

*States' Rights:* Neglected in Nigeria's political debates are the rights of states. Ordinary Nigerians value their states if they are meaningful. A renewed federal pact must articulate the rights of states which should include exercising a choice of having their own constitutions, flags, civil police formations, and reasonable allocation of funds from the Federation account. Each of the present 36 states in Nigeria is bigger, in land area and population, than Gambia and will be able to thrive with proper constitutional arrangements.

*Federal Government as a Government of Last Resort:* We must rethink the meaning and place of the Central government. One sad consequence of over-centralization is that the Federal Government appears as the first layer of governance, rather than assuming secondary roles that will be invoked when the

states fail or cannot be relevant. The functions of the Central Government must be limited, instead of being so vast as to render it unable to perform any of them well.

**1960/1963 Constitution versus Military Constitutions.** We must reconfigure the Nigerian Constitution by respecting the principles and processes of the 1963 Constitution whose construction involved every constituent state and even communities. It must have a ratification clause that is vested with states. The centralization impulses embedded in the military-supervised Constitutions (e.g. 1979) must be blunted in the new effort.

**Revenue Allocation:** The existing revenue allocation formula, which has been imposed by the military, is widely viewed as unjust. The danger of concentrating common funds at the Central government is that it negatively affects local economic activities. The new federal pact must limit governmental powers at the center and allow the states to become the engine of growth for the Nigerian economy.

**Land Use Decree.** Repealing the Land Use Decree will go a long way in Southern Nigeria to restore faith in government.



## **ASSESSING THE NIGERIAN ECONOMIC: GROWTH, DISTRIBUTION AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION**

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The Nigerian economy has undergone fundamental structural changes over the last four decades. There is evidence however, that the dramatic structural shifts that occurred did not result in any appreciable and sustained economic growth and development. The economy which was largely at the sedimentary stage of development during the first half of the present century started experiencing some structural transformation immediately after the country's independence in 1960. Throughout the 1970s and 1960s and in the early parts of 1970s, agriculture was the core of economic activities in Nigeria. Then, manufacturing and mining activities were at very low levels of development and the country's participation in the external trade was informed by the level of economic activities in agriculture. Agricultural commodities dominated the country's export trade, while manufactured goods dominated imports.

The oil boom of 1973-74 brought a new dimension into the economic activities of the country. The sharp increase in oil revenue in 1973-1974 and again in 1979-1980 had a pervasive effect on the Nigerian economy. The increase in public spending designed to expand infrastructure, non-oil productive capacity, human capacity, and healed the wounds of the civil war that savaged the country between 1967 and 1970, consequently, rising wages and appreciating domestic currency squeezed the profitability of non-oil exports, while cheap imports competed with domestic food production. As a result, the country's resources shifted from the production of non-oil traded goods (mostly agricultural) to that of non-traded goods (mostly public services). The emergence of the oil boom, therefore, relegated agriculture to the background. Within a decade, Nigeria became a major food importer, while production of export crops declined substantially, making the country dependent on a volatile international oil market for almost all of her export earnings and most of the federal, state, and local government revenues (Taiwo, 1990).

Consequently, with the sharp fall in international oil price in the early 1980s and late 1986, Nigeria's economy was almost at the large fiscal and external deficits and other macroeconomic imbalances. To address the problem, the

government introduced several policy measures which included the stabilisation Act of 1992, budget tightening measures of 1984, and finally the orchestrated Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) which was introduced in the late 1986. SAP, for example was aimed at laying the foundation for self-supporting and dynamic economy. However, given the experience of the past decade, the problems of internal and external imbalances cum the undue dependence on oil which brought about the adjustment problems and still persistence implying the relative insensitivity of the economy to the corrective policies that have been put in place since 1986 (Oyejide 1990, Ekpo 1992).

Having attempted an overview of the Nigerian economy so far, the remaining part of the paper is devoted to Economic Growth, Income Distribution and Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria.

## **ECONOMIC GROWTH**

The 1970s witnessed a remarkable change in private and public perceptions about the ultimate nature of economic activity. In both rich and poor countries there was a growing disillusionment with the idea that the relentless pursuit of growth was the principal economic objective of a society (Todaro, 1993). It is quite obvious, however, that there can be no meaningful development without growth. This is why in poor countries in particular, a major concern is focussed on the question of economic growth and income distribution. It is also obvious that development required a higher Gross National Product (GNP) and the basic issue is not only how to make the GNP grow but also who would make it grow. If it were the rich, they would most likely appreciate it, and poverty and inequality would continue to worsen. But if it were generated by the many, they would be its beneficiaries, and fruits of economic growth would be shared more evenly (Olaloku 1994, Oyejide, 1990).

Economic growth in Nigeria is best examined by focusing on the aggregate indicators of macroeconomic performance. The Nigerian economy has experienced started growth for a long period since independence. Even during the period of the oil boom, Nigeria did not experience a positive growth rate continuously for an average of six year. The first half of the 1980s was particularly bad, being characterised by negative rates of growth of output. The negative growth rates indicated a depressed economic situation partly caused by the worldwide economic recession of the period and partly caused by over-dependence on oil proceeds income and gross mismanagement of the economy.

## **GDP**

The level of economic activity in the country is measured by the GDP which is a measure of the total final output of the economy, that is, all goods produced and services rendered within the territory by residents and non-residents. The GDP is presented in two kinds of valuation, first at current prices when all goods and services are valued at base year and the second is when the goods and services are valued at constant prices. Table 1 shows the GDP in millions of Naira between 1994 and 1997 using 1984 as the base year.

Table 1: Nigerian GDP for the period 1994 - 1997 (N million)

YEAR	CURRENT FACTOR COST	CONSTANT FACTOR COST	REAL GROWTH (%)
1994	911,068.01	1,960,685.58	2.14
1995	2,740,458.49	103,506.96	-3.40
1996	3,129,245.19	107,029.22	-3.78
1997	101,334.78	101,334.78	

Source: FOS, Abuja, January, 1998

Though the figures for 1996 and 1997 are preliminary, table 1 shows that growth had been marginal. However, it should be noted that the reality of the economy cannot be captured by nominal values alone, especially when the standard of living of the citizens is considered very important. And this should be the objective of any rational government. Therefore, it would be necessary to have a look at the GDP per capita of Nigeria for the years under consideration.

Table 2: GDP per capita of Nigeria (1994-1997)

YEAR	POPULATION	GDP (N) MILLION	PER CAPITA (N)
1994	96,763,495	911,068.01	9,415.41
1995	99,501,902	1,960,685.58	19,704.99
1996	102,317,806	2,740,458.49	19,704.99
1997	105,213,400	3,129,245.19	29,742.00

Source: FOS, Abuja, January, 1998

In the table above, the per capita income was derived by dividing the gross domestic product at current price by the mid year population. The per capita income figures in this country may not be reliable because of the difficulty involved in data collection. However, the rate of growth of the per capita income is less than the rate of growth of the population.

The structure and character of the Nigerian economy is portrayed by the

contribution of economic sectors to the GDP. This contribution is showed in quantitative terms by the share of sector of origin to the GDP at current price. The share of GDP by five sectors of the economy in 1997 is illustrated below.

Table 3: Percentage share of GDP by five (5) sectors 1997 (%)

Crude oil and gas	41.4
Whole and Retail trade	13.3
Manufacturing	4.8
Others	7.9
Agriculture	
(i) Live-stock	3.4
(ii) Fishing	1.3
(iii) Agro-crops	27.7
(iv) Forestry	0.4
Sub total	32.8

Source: FOS, Abuja January, 1998.

In 1997, the primary sector consisting of agricultural crops, live-stock, forestry, and fishing contributed 32.8 percent. The crude oil and gas sector accumulated for about 41.4 percentage. Wholesale and Retail trade sector contributed 4.8 per cent, while all the other sectors contributed 7.9 percentage. Thus, the Nigerian economy is dominated by petroleum and agricultural sectors.

The GDP by sector of origin is based on 1984 constant prices, because current value series of the GDP have not shown the real charges of production of goods and services. The effects of inflation are removed by deflating the current value series. The content value series are suitable for measuring the changes in the components of gross domestic product in real or quantitative terms.

Based on the very preliminary data of the GDP at constant 1984 price, the Nigerian economy grew by 3.78% in 1997. This achievement came from the growth in the primary sector comprising agricultural crops, livestock, forestry and fishing by 4.22%, mining and quarrying sector by 8.23%, manufacturing 0.80%, distributive trade 0.5%, whereas other sectors increased by 3.12% (FOS 1998). The real GDP growth by the major economic sectors is presented in the table below.

Table 4: Real Growth GDP by five (5) economic sectors 1997 (%)

Agriculture	4.22
Mining and quarrying	8.22
Manufacturing	0.80

Trade	0.50
Others	3.12
Total	3.78

Source: FOS, Abuja, January 1998.

The GDP is also presented by expenditure showing the final demand by its component, as shown in Table 5 below. In 1997, the household consumption had a 82.58% in GDP, while it was 84.07% in the previous years, based on series figures. Increase in stocks share accounted for 0.01% in 1997. Gross fixed capital formation increased from 5.78% in 1996 to 6% share in 1997.

Table: 5 Gross Capital formation to GDP Ratio 1994 -1997

Year	percentage
1994	9.39
1995	5.85
1996	5.96
1997	6.21

Source: FOS, Abuja, January 1998.

The share of exports of goods and services from 25.490% in 1996 to 26.71% showed and increased in 1997. The share of imports of goods and services also increased marginally from 20.54% in 1996 to 20.69% in 1997 (FOS, 1988). The analysis of GDP by expenditure, thus explains for example, the progress of capital formation due to investment policies and the nexus between export and import occasioned by external trade policy.

## INFLATION

There cannot be a thorough analysis of current economic situation without an understanding of price movements. Price movements indicate the presence of demand shifts or changes in supply availability. The movements in the market conditions are reflected more quickly in changing price quotations than in sales or production statistics. Therefore, the consumer price index (CPI) is an indicator of economic performance whose growth rate measures the rate of inflation. This index was stable in the 1960s even during the war period. CPI was 7.5 in 1963, roused to 9.1 in 1969, and by 1980, 1988, 1994, and 1996 (October) it had risen to 42.5, 181.2, 1087.9 and 2,571.1 respectively.

The period 1960-1969 experienced an average inflation rate of 3.85 as opposed

to an average of 15.81 for the period 1970-1979 (FOS 1996). In fact, if there were any indicator of economic performance in the 1980s and 1990s that showed some high degrees of instability, then it was the growth rate of CPI (i.e. inflation rate) (CBN 1994). One peculiar feature of this index is the diminutive impact on the living standard of the people. As such in some years where inflation was exceeding high (for instance in 1984, 1988, and 1993 with inflation rates of 39.6, 56.1, and 57.2 respectively), the hardest hit was the purchasing power of the people.

The most unpleasant impact of skyrocketing inflation rate is the instability that is often transferred to other macroeconomic variables thus creating a non-conducive atmosphere for investment in the real sector of the economy. Thus speculative and service businesses boom at the expense of productive activities. Such was the case in the part decade in Nigeria; and the reason why the authorities were working towards the objective of sustaining a single digit inflation rate which was achieved in the most part of 1998 (1999 budget speech).

However, empirical studies have shown that inflation in Nigeria was caused by many factors, critical among which included budget indiscipline, excess liquidity in the economy, exchange depreciation, and debt overhang/burden (Taiwo 1990, Ekpo 1992).

## **INCOME DISTRIBUTION AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION**

The distribution of income in a country indicates the existence or otherwise the presence of poverty. In other words, the existence and incidence of poverty can be determined from the study of income distribution in the absence of income distribution data per se, because relative inequality in income distribution indicates poverty. Every country has the social responsibility of ensuring that every citizen has a fair share of the National wealth. In Nigeria, there are different provisions in the 1979 constitution containing references in the distribution of income and wealth. These are found in the provision of section 16 (2) (a) directing the state to provide a balanced economic development. Subsections 16 (2) (b) and (c) provide further that the state shall ensure that:

- (b) the material resources of the community are harnessed and distributed as best as possible to serve the common good,
- (c) 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 a few individuals or group,
- (d) suitable and adequate shelter, suitable and adequate living wage, old age care and pensions are provided for all citizens (Okigbo 1982). If the provision

in (c) is given any attention or priority they may be little or no problem of poverty in the country.

## **POVERTY PROFILE AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN NIGERIA**

The concern about poverty in sub-saharan African countries including Nigeria has been very tremendous. In Nigeria, resulting from large scale poverty human conditions have greatly deteriorated in the past fifteen years. Real disposable incomes have dwindled, while malnutrition rates are on the increase. Resulting from the rate of population growth which has out stripped the rate of food production and rate of increasing the social services, the quality of nutrition as well as of educational and health services has deteriorated a great deal, (Aboyode 1975, Ilori 1995, Obidegwu 1992, Olayemi 1995, World Bank 1995).

Evidence suggests that the concern for poverty is two dimensional. Overtime, a sizeable reduction in poverty is important, both in its own write and as a first step toproviding the means for the self-improvement of the most disadvantaged in the society.

## **THE CONCEPT AND MEASUREMENT OF POVERTY IN NIGERIA**

According to Oppenheim and Harker (1996) poverty means going short materially, socially, and emotionally. It means spending less on food, clothing than someone on average income. Above all, poverty takes away the tools to build the blocks for the future. Poverty level, therefore, is a measure of human deprivation. The higher the level of poverty, the lower the level of human development (Alcock 1997).

The incidence of poverty in Nigeria can be seen from the largely unimpressive performance of the Nigerian economy which is an indication of subsisting or probably increasing poverty. Although relevant statistics on poverty are unavailable, there is an indirect but strong evidence of widespread poverty which is mainly visible from the observable living conditions of large proportions of the populace (Olayemi 1995). Using a poverty line of one US Dollar per person, per day converted to purchasing power parity (PPP), the World Bank (1996) estimated that the head count incidence of poverty in Nigeria, in 1992 was 34.1%. The incidence of poverty was generally higher in the rural areas than in the urban areas. In Nigeria 73% of the poor are in the rural areas.

Measurement of poverty is as difficult a task as is the definition of poverty, especially in a country like Nigeria. The most widely used measure of poverty is the number of the poor, known as the head count. According to Basidhan (1973)

and Ahluwalia (1976) head count ratio is the ratio of individuals or households whose income fall below the poverty line. Another traditional measure is the 'poverty gap'. This is the average deviation of the incomes of the poor from the poverty line. These two measures have the problem of being insensitive to the actual income level of the poor. Thus a transfer from the poorest to the least poor which raises the income of the latter above poverty line would reduce head count, while in the case of poverty gap it will be less obvious that poverty has fallen.

Since poverty embraces both material, and non-material aspects relating to quality of life, educational attainment, nutritional and health status, and these indicators are not easy to measure, it has become common practice to supplement income based measures of poverty with non-income indicators. (Morris 1979, Ahmad and Hemming 1991, World Bank 1993, Kakwani 1995). It has been proslutated that Index of Social Progress (ISP) captures not only the non-monetary indicators (e.g infant mortality, life expectancy, school enrollment etc) but also expands the scope into ten-sub indices. This ISP comprises access to education, health status, demography, geography, political participation, cultural diversity and welfare efforts (Estes 1984 and 1988).

## **POVERTY PROFILE IN NIGERIA**

People in Nigeria, like others in other sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia remain the poorest in the world. In 1992, between 45 and 50 percent of the approximately 525 million people in sub-Saharan Africa were estimated to be living below poverty line. As once observed, the depth of poverty in Sub-Saharan African is typically higher than elsewhere in the world (World Bank 1995a: PP 12-13). The picture is not different in Nigeria. But before the extent of poverty in Nigeria is examined, it is essential to mention the causes of poverty in Nigeria. These causes are related to problems of access and endowment (Afonja and Ogwumike 1995) They are:

- (a) Inadequate access to employment opportunities for the poor. This is often caused by stunted growth of economic activities or growth with labour serving device;
- (b) Lack of inadequate access to assets such as land and capital by the poor: this is often attributed to the absence of land reform and minimal opportunities for small scale credit;
- (c) Inadequate access to means of fostering rural development in poor regions: the preference for high potential areas and the strong urban bias in the design of development programmes is often assumed to be its primary cause;
- (d) Inadequate access to markets for goods and services that poor can cell: this



is caused by their remote geographic location or other factors.

(e) Inadequate access to education, health and water services. This emanates from inadequate social services delivery which consequently results in the inability of the poor to live a healthy and active life and take full advantage of employment opportunities.

(f) The destruction of the natural resource endowments which led to reduced productivity of agricultural, forestry and fisheries. This often resulted from the desperate survival strategies of the poor as well as inadequate and ineffective public policy on natural resource management;

(g) The inadequate access to assistance by those who are the victims of transitory poverty such as drought, floods, erosion, pests and war. This was brought about by lack of well conceived strategies, and sources, and

(h) Inadequate involvement of the poor in the design of development programmes. This is often exacerbated by the non-involvement of the representatives of the poor communities or beneficiaries in discussion, preparation design and implementation of programmes that will affect them.

These multidimensional causes of material and non-material deprivation make poverty to be very pervasive in the country. Two approaches can be used to analyse the poverty profile of Nigeria. These are the Eclectic Approach and the Living Index Approach to poverty profile.

## **ECLECTIC APPROACH**

Issues relating to poverty in Nigeria have long been of great concern to many. For instance, the Nigerian Economic Society (NES) organised an annual conference in 1975, the theme of which was "Poverty in Nigeria". This conference examined related issues, but attempts were not made to use the conceptual framework and measurement toward ameliorating the incidence of poverty (Ogwunike 1991). Using micro data of 980 households in Borno, Imo and Oyo States and complemented by FOS data, Ogwunike derived some poverty lines for Nigeria. This derivation was based on the weekly requirement of an average household size of six members. The food poverty line derived was N38.00 per head per month or N456.00 per head per year. The overall basic needs income (poverty line) was estimated at N47.44 per head per month or approximately N569.00 per head per year. And using income head obtained from the survey, the study estimated that 46 million were living in poverty as at 1986. As a point of emphasis if this result is assumed to approximate reality of poverty in Nigeria then the country is chronically poor with about 59 percent of her citizens adjudged poor.

In another study, Ogwunike and Ekpeyong (1995) using the eclectic approach

also computed the food poverty line based on 1992 prices to be N210 per head per month or N2,520.00 per year. The overall poverty line (including food and non-food) was N280 per head per month or N3,360.00 per head per year. The world Bank (1995) in collaboration with the Federal Office of Statistics used the National Consumer Expenditure Survey data collected in 1985/86 and 1992/93 to assess the poverty trend in Nigeria between 1985 and 1992. The study adopted two thirds of the mean household expenditure as the poverty line. The main findings of the study are that:

- (a) Poverty was more pronounced in rural than urban;
- (b) the southern part of the country had less poverty than either the central or northern parts of the country; and
- (c) Poverty in Nigeria declined between 1985 and 1992.

In fact, the assertion that poverty declined in Nigeria between 1985 and 1992 has generated some discussions (e.g. STATCO 1995, Afonja and Ogwumike 1995). Therefore, there is the need to resort to an economic law, Engle law, for a further critical examination of the findings, Engle's law states that if food share of any household income rises beyond 10 to 20 percent, then, the household has become poorer and hence the living condition has worsened. The world bank report indicated that the lowest 40 percent of the population spent 79 percentage of their total expenditure on food in 1985 which later increased to 90 percent in 1992. Therefore, by Engle's law, standard of living had declined in Nigeria between 1985 and 1992.

The recourse to per capita consumption expenditure as the basis for poverty reduction is misleading FOS, (1996). The use of two-thirds of the mean per capita consumption does not give room for a proper examination of the quality of items consumed which may change over the two points time-1985 and 1992. Based on the existing studies therefore, many Nigerians are adjudged to be poor. A look at another indicator may shed more light on the endemicity of poverty in Nigeria.

#### **LIVING INDEX APPROACH**

Assessing poverty profile in developing countries often hinges upon the provision of social services such as education and health care among others and the level of income. In Nigeria, GDP had been declining from the 1970's heights. The level of per capita real GDP between 1980 and 1993 was far below the 1975 level (FOS 1996). Considering the per capita real expenditure on health and education. The levels between 1980 and 1993 also fell below the 1975 level.

The discomfort index, which combines the rate at which the purchasing power of the domestic currency falls and the dependency burden signified by increases in the unemployment rate, shows that the period between 1988 and 1993 (with exception of 1990 and 1991) was very impoverishing (FOS 1996). The purchasing power of the people declined terribly. The implication of the decline in the purchasing power on living conditions can not be underestimated.

In Nigeria, workers income has been relatively stagnant or declining in real terms, social services expenditures have been falling. Hence, the burden of expenditure in these areas has worsened the condition of the Nigeria poor. No Society can surely be flourishing and happy of which by far the greater part of the numbers are poor and miserable (Adam Smith, 1776). The primary task of development is to eliminate poverty (World Bank, World Development Report, 1992). Poverty alleviation had not been especially entrenched in Nigeria's development plans. Attention was usually focused on economic growth. But then, a critical examination of the objectives of Nigeria's development plans, especially the first four indicated that there was a pursuit of poverty alleviation. For instance, the first National Development Plan had its social objectives focused on the well being of Nigerians. The second, third and fourth plans emphasised equity and income distribution or a more even distribution of the fruits of economic growth.

In recent times, the apparent increasing concern of the government for poverty alleviation can be observed. For instance, in the 1999 Budget tagged "Consolidating poverty alleviation measures, the Federal Government, in order to further consolidate efforts towards poverty alleviation and the development of the rural sector, provided N1 billion to the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP). Similarly, it earmarked the sum of N500 million to the People's Bank of Nigeria and the National Directorate for Employment (NDE) for provision of soft loans and support services to cottage and small scale industries (Business Times Joinery, 4th 1999).

Before gauging poverty alleviation in Nigeria, the need to highlight the common approaches to poverty alleviation seems imperative. Some of the approaches include Economic Growth approach, Basic Needs approach, and Rural Development approach.

### **ECONOMIC GROWTH APPROACH**

This approach is based on the fundamental assumption that economic deprivation is at the root of all poverty and that non-economic causes are only secondary, arising from the primary economic causes. Therefore, the focus of

this approach is on rapid economic growth as measured by rate of growth in real per capita GDP or per capita national income, price stability, declining unemployment among others. These can only be attained through appropriate harmonisation of monetary and fiscal policies.

This approach works through trickle down effect. That is, as economic growth progresses, the effects will progressively trickle down to the core poor and most advantaged in the society. This approach has been subjected to intense criticism. It is argued that:

(a) There is nothing inherent in economic growth that automatically guarantees poverty alleviation. Also, even some segments of the society, it often creates new poverty or aggravates existing poverty in other segments of the society (Olayemi 1995, Pfeffermann 1991, Kakwani 1990). Therefore, because of the above arguments and the pitfalls of economic growth, the basic needs approach seems to be more favoured.

### **BASIC NEEDS APPROACH**

In this approach, poverty is viewed as being broad-based and that programmes should be targetted to tackle the wider causes of poverty. The basic needs are those basic necessities which enable the poor to live a decent life. However, what these basic needs are vary from one individual to another, and from country to country. Most of the basic needs include such things as food, and nutrition, health and education, employment etc. According to Bamberger (1992), the instrument of this approach is targeting. As such, there is the need to properly identify the poor, the causes of poverty and the needs of the poor.

Olayemi (1995) observed that the basic need approach (BNA) to poverty alleviation programmes are expected to have the following components:

- (a) Economic component to promote broad-based economic growth and create employment and income generating opportunities for both the poor and non-poor but, perhaps with the poor receiving special attention;
- (b) social services component of BNA should provide education, health and nutrition, clean water, good roads, physical social economic infrastructure.
- (c) the safety-net component should provide relief to the old, disabled, destitutes and transitory poor.

### **RURAL DEVELOPMENT APPROACH**

This approach argues for the total emancipation and empowerment of the rural

sector. The sector is expected to be treated uniquely in terms of poverty alleviation strategies. The need for unique treatment is necessitated by the fact earlier expressed, and as acknowledged by the World Bank, that majority of the poor are in the rural areas. Food which is the most essential basic need is purely a rural business. Moreover, the rural sector is often the weaker sector when compared with the urban sector.

An integrated rural development strategy (IRDS) has been advocated as capable of simultaneously holistic and intersectoral manipulation of all necessary variables which together could alleviate poverty.

## **POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES AND THEIR ASSESSMENT IN NIGERIA**

Since after the take off of the structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1986 the Federal Government has been more conscious about poverty alleviation programmes. Earlier programmes such as free and compulsory primary education operation feed the Nation (OFN) rural electrification Schemes, rural banking schemes, low cost housing schemes, small scale enterprises schemes etc, were not consciously designed for the purpose of poverty alleviation. Although some of these programmes had laudable achievements, they could not be sustained for an appreciable long period due to lack of political will and commitment and adequate involvement of the beneficiaries in these programmes.

To cushion the effects of SAP hardship on the poor, certain poverty alleviation programmes have been put in place. These programmes are categorised into multi-sectorial, and sectorial programmes .

### **MULTI-SECTORAL PROGRAMMES**

These programmes were mostly targetted at opening the rural areas and the poor. Among these are: the Directorate Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI), the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) the Better Live Programme (BLP), the Family Support Programme (FSP), and the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP). These programmes had very landable objectives, but the problems of prioritisation and implementation have often reduced the achievement of their goods. Among the, BLP was gender specific and targeted at rural women; the same fate of resources being used for personal aggrandisement. The FSP which replaced the BLP is still on course, can not be evaluated in this paper for want of concrete evidence.

## **SECTORAL PROGRAMMES**

The sectors under consideration in this paper include Agricultural Manufacturing Educational Health, Housing and Environment.

### **(a). AGRICULTURE:**

Since 1986, poverty alleviation related programmes in the agricultural sector include; Agricultural Development Programme (ADP), National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA); Strategic Grains Reserves; Alleviated Crop production Schemes (ACPS) and the Development of Artisanal Fishery and small Ruminant production, pasture and grossing schemes. The ADPs - a World Bank assisted programme, located in all state capitals, and more local governments have the objective boosting the productivity of peasant farmers through farm inputs supply, extension services, and construction and maintenance of rural roads. The ADPs have been successful in most state; and has fostered the establishment of cooperatives among the farmers.

### **(b) EDUCATION:**

A lot of efforts have been made since 1996 to increase the level of literacy through man literacy schemes established in every state of the Federation. Also Nomadic and Adult Education Programmes were established to eradicate illiteracy which is one of the causes of poverty. Despite all these efforts, Nigeria is still among the 11 worst countries in sub-Saharan Africa (FOS, 1996) A clear indication of this is the lack of strong political will to implement these programmes.

### **(c) HEALTH:**

The health sector has also experienced attempts made towards improvement of the conditions of the poor. At the centre of the National Health Policy during this period was the Primary Health Care (PHC) system which is purely protective, promotive and preventive. The major components of the PHC are child and maternal Health (eg 1 Family Health, Health Education, Immunisation etc) control of local endemic diseases, Mental health and provision of essential drugs (the PTF is recommended for its performance in this area) and promotion of food supply. In spite of all these efforts, the health condition in the country is still very precarious.

### **(d) HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT:**

The Federal Ministry of Works and Housing and State Governments have put in place housing programmes. Attempts have been made to provide land for housing and the building of prototype low cost houses in most state capitals. The Government has attempted to make the environment neat and safe. Apart

from the environmental Day programmes fixed for every last Saturday of every month, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) was also established in 1989 to monitor and enforce compliance with environmental protection measures. Activities of FEPA also check problems of poor sewage and drainage, erosion and flooding, depletion of natural resources all of which worsen poverty levels.

**(e) Manufacturing :**

Several studies (Bamberger 1992, Obidegwu 1992, Olayemi 1995, Ilori 1995) have confirmed that cottage and small scale industries dominate the Nigerian manufacturing sector. This sub-sector, based on the experience of the Asian Tiger has been considered the engine of growth. And characteristically the sub-sectors predominated by the poor. To improve the well being of this vulnerable group, government effects have been very tremendous in the past fifteen years. Many credit institutions have mobilised and new ones established, these include industrial development centres, Nigerians Bank for commerce and industry, Peoples Bank, National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND), Community Banks among others.

Poverty alleviate in Nigeria has been seen as a challenge by many because the need to eradicate poverty is the responsibility of Nigerians and we have to brace up to the task (First lady 1999). It has also been suggested that the incoming civilian administration has to face the challenge of undertaking only projects that would alleviate the high level of poverty in the economy (Adedeji 1999).

### **CONSTRAINTS TO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA**

From the foregoing analysis, it would be observed that there are some obstacles to the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programmes (Ilori 1995). These include:

- a) Poor management of the programmes;
- b) The ad hoc nature of most of the programmes with the result that they were not integrated into the national development policies;
- c) The vagueness of the scope of the programmes as a result of the weak and ad hoc nature of the conception design and identification;
- d) Lack of effective mechanism for project monitoring;
- e) Poor co-ordination of programmes during implementation;
- f) Failure to have an in-built mechanism for the sustainability of the programmes' benefits;
- g) Failure to involve the beneficiaries at both the conception and

implementation stages;

- h) Failure to check the high level of instability within other macro economic policy environment;
- i) Lack of political will from the public sector managers;
- j) Bureaucratic bottlenecks in the provision of services such as rural credit, credit to small scale enterprises, education and health.

## **TOWARDS ENHANCING AN EFFECTIVE POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES**

Poverty is a product of dynamic social forces and policies have often been developed overtime to combat or reduce it. If therefore, despite these policies poverty persists, then perhaps explanation should look not to the failings of the poor but to the but to the failings of anti-poverty policies, and to the agencies and institutions responsible for making them work (Alcock 1997). So if the policies in place do not work, perhaps as Macgregor (1981) argues, they (policies) are product of political decisions and poverty is a political concept; and its identification is linked to political action to eliminate it. Thus if poverty remains, then politicians have failed either to identify it accurately or to develop appropriate policies in response to it, However, it is suggested that sustainable poverty alleviation anchors on three approaches:

- a) Policies that promote efficient growth and which make use of the poor's most abundant asset, labour.
- b) Public expenditure on institutions that provide equitable access to education, health care, and other social services. These should properly integrate social safety net for the most valuable groups in the society.
- c) Stable macroeconomic policy environment is also considered very vital and imperative.

Unfortunately, these approaches have either been neglected in Nigeria, or given very little attention.

## **CONCLUSION**

So far we may have learnt that an understanding of the nature of economic growth, the size and distribution of income is central to the analysis of the poverty problem in low income countries, including Nigeria. While there may seem to be some relative growth had brought to the poor. We were taught to take care of our GDP as this will take care of poverty; perhaps, we have to reverse to take care of the GDP. This is because the elimination of widespread poverty and growing income inequality is at the core of development problems,



and in fact defines for many people, in Nigeria, the principal objective of development policy. It is very obvious that poverty is endemic in Nigeria, as examined in this paper, the severity, spread and depth of poverty in the country calls for deliberate conscious and well focused efforts to poverty alleviation.

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# ENHANCING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLICY MAKING: GENDER DIMENSIONS AND POLICY OPTIONS

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CANADA

## Background

In 1991 the National census put Nigeria's population at 88.9 million. With an annual growth rate of 2.8%, Nigeria now has 110 million people with women at approximately 50% of the population. Women are however yet to translate this number into strength as they continue to play a minimal role in the public policy process. This is traceable to: First, Nigeria's colonial history -Colonialism dislocated the traditional basis on which women were given some measure of relevance in their communities. Women had evolved a parallel political system evident in the community based associations organised around kinship, social and economic interests (Mba, 1989, Amadiume 1987 ).

Nationalist struggles saw women challenging the state as the Aba women's war, of 1929, Egba women's resistance to trade embargo on local dyes (Mba, 1987). It also in the same way gave rise to the formation of women's organisations in different parts of the country culminating in the formation of the first national women's organisation in 1959 - the National Council of Women Societies. (NCWS). Independence 1960 did not translate into a definite departure from the marginalisation for women. It was only in 1986, that a specific policy framework on women was evolved.

Nigeria has been constrained for the 28 of its 38 years of independence by military rule with a centralised administrative structure. Women are not so visible here because the military is essentially male dominated. There has been no female representation on any military policy making body as the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC), National Council of State or National Executive Council. Few women ministers were appointed by each successive regime 1966 - 1999.

In the regime of Babangida 1985 - 1993 States were directed to appoint at least one woman into the State Executive Council.

Constitutionally women's rights to participate in public life is recognised as enshrined in the 1979 constitution. Any individual above the age of 18 'regardless of sex' who has never been convicted is eligible to vote and be appointed to public office through voting or nomination (See 1979 constitution Sections 39\1, 71\2, 62\1). A National Policy on women is also being considered for adoption.

The transition to civil rule (Political parties registration and activities) decree 1989 also proscribes discrimination on the basis of sex. Also proscribed was the establishment of women's wings of Political Parties. (WIN 1998).

Traditional values informed by culture and religion also constitute constraining factors. This is evident in patriarchal practices, as women lack of social, political and economic independence. This also leads to a lack of access to productive resources as education, credit, technological and health information. (WIN, 1995).

### **The Policy Making Process**

There is an assumption of a homogenous policy environment partly because it is assumed that policies affect women similarly as men. Thus a lack of a gender perspective to the process of policy analysis. Planning statistics for instance did not begin to take a gender dis-aggregated form before 1990. This was a result of an intensification of the international outcry on the need for collection of data on the status of women.

Poor implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies which are designed with a gender focus. Examples are the state facilitated and monitored Women in Development WID initiatives. These include:

The Directorate for Foods Roads and Infrastructure (DFRRI) - A poverty alleviating strategy 1987.

1989 the Better Life for Rural Women BLF.

1990 came the Women commission charged with the responsibility of designing gender sensitive programmes.

1994 with a change in military leadership came the Family Support Programme utilising a framework of the family for poverty alleviation. Its working instrument is the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP).

The Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development charged with bringing a focus to women and gender related issues.

### **The Argument for Affirmative Action**

It has been argued that women fare better in systems with proportional representation. (UN, 1987). Women's role in Nigeria has so far been marginal. For instance, in the second republic (1979 - 83), only twelve women were in the national legislature - one senator out of 57 and 11 out of 445 members of House of representative. In the aborted third republic (1993), 14 were members of House of representatives of 589 and one senator out of 91. Out the 3,000 gubernatorial aspirants, only eight were women and none succeeded.

In the Nigerian context the particular argument put forward by feminists is the need for equity and justice in the allocation of national resources. Meaningful democracy can only be attained for women when they are allowed to make critical decisions which affect them. Arguments for the 30% (Beijing 1995) quota was put forward by numerous women's groups to the Constitution Debate Co-ordinating Committee in 1998 resulting in the inclusion of specific gender recommendations which cover issues of representation.

### **Potential Strategies for the greater inclusion of Women in the Policy Process**

Historically, contradictions exist between women's domestic role - the gendered division of labour - and participation in the public sphere where national policies are made.

There is therefore the need to recognise :

That space creation for women must thus begin from a renegotiation of their domestic position as active rather than passive agents of change.

View policy as emanating from two levels - the informal and the formal level and the existence of a multiplier effect positive or negative on the latter level.

That policies designed must have a built in strategy of effective implementation continuous monitoring and evaluation.

That the process for change demands the inclusion of Government, Civil Society Organisations, Community Based Organisations (CBOs) as well as the Private Sector.

## **The Government**

Bilateral agreements should favour the inclusion of affirmative action for women in all facets of Nigerian Public Life.

Co-operation should be sought over projects targeted at the majority women in the rural and peri urban communities. Educational projects, early child development initiatives, income generating skills are practical measures which give women the much needed independence and also act as 'gate openers' in accessing women towards discussing with them more strategic issues like their political rights. This is most important in predominantly Muslim areas where there is a greater resistance to change.

Review of existing laws so as to eliminate all forms of discriminations against women especially with a view to empowering Nigerian women to have equal access to resources as well as opportunities.

## **Private Sector**

Equal employment opportunities across gender should be encouraged both in the private and public sectors.

All establishments should have supportive laws and facilities such as creches and day care centres to reduce the pressure on nursing mothers in paid employment. Private organisations should have women constituting not less than 30% of their employees.

## **NGO CBO Link**

Greater awareness arising from the international outcry on the plight of women has led to the emergence of women's NGOs concerned with the utilisation of practical strategies as access to credit for women in the grassroots and peri-urban and urban areas.

Facilitating access to information for women towards enhancing their ability to negotiate with their environments. A critical method has been reinterpreting religious perspectives on women. Federation of Muslim Women in Nigeria (FOMWAN), Women Living Under Muslim Law - project, Women in Nigeria (WIN) and the Network for Women Studies in Nigeria (NWSN) are examples of women's organisations concerned with the deconstruction of knowledge and the creation of space for women.

The need to build a link between these women's groups and their community CBO counterparts is however important. This is necessary if women are to

translate number into strength on negotiating for their rightful place in the policy environment. Policy measures here should include:

Encouraging original initiatives by women NGOs and other Civil Society groups aimed at connecting/bridging the gap between elite and none elite women. Examples include talkshows, radio programmes and jingles, community based projects.

Encourage the scouting for younger potential women leaders and provide them with training in political skills. This could take the form of training workshops, exchange programmes and opportunities to monitor political processes in other parts of the world.

Providing supportive services to women politicians particularly in the areas of writing campaign materials, advice, etc. Provide training in lobbying and advocacy skills for women's groups.

### **Greater Civil Society**

Support should be given for the further development of a gender sensitive, critical media.

Research support to institutions of higher learning for the development of transformational methodologies in the teaching of gender and women studies.

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## SUSTAINING CIVIL LIFE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

By Nnimmo Bassey

The environment is the stage on which the drama of our civil life is played. This environment is our land, our water, our forests, our air and our life. The essential difference between this drama and what is presented in the theatres is that this is no make-belief. This drama is a matter of life and death. Our civic sector is massed with a conglomerate of people and alliances some seeking to carry on with life undisturbed by linkages with other people, and groups actively seeking ways of defending their receding resources and liberties.

An active civil society watches out for its best corporate interest and has goals to aim at, and reasons to hope and fight for the realisation of its dreams. The active civil society is a threat to dictators and the exploiters who hide behind the dictator's swagger stick. In the Nigerian State, a section of the civil society has managed to remain active and articulate at great risks. Because they provide the alternative expression and a voice for the voiceless, much violence has been visited on its leaders as is well documented and known within and outside Nigeria. The violence continues as expected because of "the relentless tendency of the state to centralise power and to evade civic accountability and control" (Larry Diamond, *Beyond Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism: Strategies for Democratisation*, quoted in When Corporations Rule the World, Earthscan 1996, by David C. Korten).

### EXPERIENCE TEACHES

Often when we talk about the weakening dislocations in the civil life of our nation our thoughts go to obvious effects of human rights abuses and mass poverty. And the most visible effects are the denial of basic right to life, freedom of movement, freedom of association and access to information and other civil liberties. It is when we dig into the causes of these abuses that we begin to see the dynamics of the situation and can articulate the strategies needed to bring about needed changes that would make our life and environment sustainable. Experience remains the best teacher when we seek to feel the pulse of any civil society.

In February this year, members of the Oilwatch Africa network met in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, for the purposes of first discussing resistance strategies to the destructive activities of the infamous oil corporations and secondly finding ways to strengthen the network. For one grueling week efforts were made to paint what we may call the true end-of-the-pipe-picture of oil activities. Many of the participants from neighbouring countries still thought there must be a light (gas flare?) at the end of the tunnel.

At the end of the talk-shop we embarked on two days of excruciating tour of oil fields in the Niger Delta. Everyone saw the naked neglect of these communities and their rough roads, where any existed. They saw that the school buildings were dilapidated and that there was a dearth of health facilities. The hunger was visible. And so were the desperation and the anger.

As we took a break at Ogbia town, David Passe (from Chad) exclaimed: "If I had been born in

the oil producing areas of the Niger Delta I would have since become a revolutionary." Someone else agreed with Passe but noted that, "the objective conditions in our individual communities necessitate our becoming revolutionaries."

On getting home to Cameroon, one of the delegates wrote to say that, "After the meeting, I can renew my engagement (that of my organisation) to resist oil activities based on human exploitation, destruction of the forest and environment, non-respect of human rights and dignity. We must win the battle."

## THE LAWFUL STIFLING OF CIVIL SOCIETY

The Nigerian state has been piloted either by the men with the "fastest gun" or those who make the highest bid (apologies to Professor Wole Soyinka) at what in popular euphemism are known as elections. Because the helmsmen are not popularly chosen they have no real commitment to meet the aspiration of the civil society. Years of military rule have deadened the sensitivity of the people to the power that lies within their grasp. Consequently, power has continued to be issued from the barracks either directly or remotely. The political arena has become a market place.

Our series of transitional governments have now turned many of our communities into transitional societies. The transitional governments are endlessly in search for foreign exchange for the repayment of old and not-so-old debts. The oil TNCs offer them the "cheapest" means of obtaining the needed foreign exchange. In this scenario, civil society is seen as an obstacle that must either be ignored or eliminated. The pampering of these TNCs has led to the permission of harmful environmental practices and the erection of permissive, anti-people environmental laws. The total effect has been the impoverishment of the people, the emasculation of civil society and the destruction of the environment. Seeing that the political class is set to snuff the life out of the people, groups have sprouted in great profusion to speak up on one front or the other. This awakening of civil society needs the encouragement of everyone particularly in the area of alliance building to harness/optimize resources to meet the powerful anti-people forces at work in the field. When civil society is able to forge credible alliances on issues they will be in a position to determine what gets priority attention in national discourse and thereon to the political arena.

## AN INNOCUOUS WAR

The 1966-70 Biafra/Nigeria civil war provided a good cover not only for the military to firm its grip on the political seats, it also presented the environment for the enactment of laws which in real terms meant a declaration of perpetual war on civil society. The effect of the unitary formation of the Nigerian State is only now being loudly pronounced through conflict and much bloodshed.

One of such laws is The Petroleum Act of 1969: Cap 350, LFN, 1990), which some have compared to laws enacted by the apartheid regime of South Africa in those days of infamy. For all practical purposes, this decree appropriated or confiscated the oil and gas resources of the fragile

Niger Delta and vested the ownership in the central government. Before then Nigeria had a robust economy with the regions actively working to harness the resources in their territories. Why were the regions healthy and the states of today little more than beggars? Section 140 of the 1963 Constitution allowed that, "there shall be paid by the federation to each region a sum equal to 50% of the proceeds of any royalties received by the federation in respect of any mineral extracted in that region. 15% of the balance went to the central government while the remaining 35% were shared to the other regions."

When the General Gowon regime threw this healthy law overboard, the exigency of the war situation may have permitted the enactment of the confiscatory law that replaced it, but on the return of "peace" there was no reason for it. The law is absolutely undemocratic and the people directly affected were never consulted before its enactment. It was foisted on a "conquered" people. This posture was further entrenched in the 1979 constitution (Article 40/3) that we are set to operate once more.

Successive governments have built on this affront and made other laws to tighten the noose on civil society. We will talk only of a few other such laws. The first is The Land Use Act of 1978 (Cap 202, LFN, 1990): which has been modified and expanded to grant full control of all land as well as mineral resources of any community or state by the federal military government. This obnoxious law was crafted by the military administration of General Olusegun Obasanjo, then not retired. This law provides the teeth with which the transnational oil companies bite into the land of the Niger Delta. Oil companies such as Shell and Chevron proudly proclaim ownership of community lands once their comrades in government confer such "rights" to them under this law which the people have strenuously objected to. Compensations paid for lands so acquired are so laughable that we should not bother to mention them here. This law is at the root of the Ogoni conflict as well as the multifarious conflicts in the Niger Delta and elsewhere.

The other laws are the Land (Title vesting etc.) Decree No. 52 of 1993 (Osborne Land Decree) and the Inland Waterways Authority Decree No 13 of 1997. Decree 52 of 1993 more or less duplicates the already existing Land Use Decree of 1978. This law states that all lands adjoining the banks measuring up to 50 metres is now the property of the federal government. This effectively makes all riverine communities squatters who may be displaced without any substantial right to protect themselves.

Environmental protection laws such as the Environmental Impact Assessment Act (Decree No. 86 of 1992) is hardly enforced. Where the oil companies, etc., attempt to comply, they never make copies of such assessments available for study by the local communities. They are thus seen as elite matters on which the people in the line of fire no nothing about.

Most of the oil installations in Nigeria were put in place in the 1960s and have not been upgraded. Although the oil companies claim they would have done something better if they were to be installed now, they are doing little to upgrade them. Their claim is that the facilities satisfy the "prevailing" conditions in the country. But Nigerian laws require that international standards be met in these matters.

## TAKING ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSAULT

After years of reckless environmental assault, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, under the leadership of Ken Saro-Wiwa, took on the Anglo-Dutch Shell Company who have bestrode the Niger Delta like a vampire since they first struck oil at Oloibiri in 1956 with the aid of a local oracle. This pioneering effort at giving civil society a voice against environmental degradation has had a very high toll. The Nigerian State murdered Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists on November 10, 1995. This was ostensibly in an effort to pave the way for the return of Shell into Ogoni land where they had been declared persona non grata. Today the resolve of the Ogoni not to succumb to intimidation has resulted in many deaths, much harassment and many living as refugees both in and outside Nigeria.

Recently the Ijaw youths under the umbrella of the Ijaw Youth Council issued the now famous "Kaiama Declaration" on December 11, 1998 at a meeting attended by over 5000 delegates. In the Declaration they noted among others that ? The quality of life of Ijaw people is deteriorating as a result of utter neglect, suppression and marginalisation visited on the people by the alliance of the Nigerian state and transnational oil companies.

- the political crisis in Nigeria is mainly about the struggle for the control of oil mineral resources
- oil resources account for over 80% of GDP, 95 % of national budget and 90% of foreign exchange earnings. They asserted that from this, 65%, 75% and 70% respectively are derived from within the Ijaw nation. They also complained that despite these huge contributions, their reward from the Nigerian State remains avoidable deaths resulting from ecological devastation and military repression.
- the continued damage done to our fragile natural environment and to the health of our people is due in the main to uncontrolled exploration and exploitation of crude oil and natural gas which has led to numerous oil spillage, uncontrolled gas flaring, the opening up of our forests to loggers, indiscriminate canalisation, flooding, land subsidence, coastal erosion, earth tremors etc.
- oil and gas are exhaustible resources and the complete lack of concern for ecological rehabilitation, of lands from where the resources are mined point at a bleak future.
- the degradation of the environment of by transnational oil companies and the Nigerian State arose mainly because the people have been robbed of their natural rights to ownership and control of their land and resources.

## THE DEMANDS

The demands outlined in the Kaiama declaration find parallels in the Ogoni Bill of Rights and have increasingly become the accepted platform for agitation by the wider Niger Delta peoples. This is a result of broad consultations and exchanges between civil society groups. Some of the key resolutions are:

- All land and natural resources (including mineral resources) belong to communities on whose territory such resources are found and are the basis of their survival.

- Non-recognition of all undemocratic decrees that rob the peoples/communities of the right to ownership and control of their lives and resources, which were enacted without our participation and consent. These include the Land Use Decree and The Petroleum Decree etc.
- To promote the principle of peaceful coexistence between all the communities despite what they call "the provocative and divisive actions of the Nigerian State, transnational oil companies and their contractors."
- Affirm commitment to joint struggle with the other ethnic nationalities in the Niger delta area for self-determination.

## **CULTURAL RESISTANCE: A DANCE OF DEATH?**

The Ijaw youths gave the Oil companies 31 December 1998 as the date by which they were to cease operations until all issues pertaining to their operations were resolved. Because civil has no coercive power the youths resorted to cultural resistance as a tool for making their point. They embarked on Ogele or dances in the streets of Yenagoa, Kaiama, Peramabiri, Ogbia, etc and were predictably met with guns by the state. As the youths danced violence came. Many were shot while scores were detained, raped or maimed. Till date, Bayelsa State remains a militarised zone.

## **RESISTANCE**

Oilwatch International activists define resistance as "the right of a people to say no and mean it, in defence of our collective environmental and human rights in order to achieve positive change". The adopted method is that of non-violence. In the face of brutal attacks by troops working at the behest of oil corporations such as the American oil company, Chevron, it is not certain for how long communities will adhere to this principle. Chevron's human rights record in Nigeria is abysmal. In the last one year they have caused the murder of two youths at Ilaje, Ondo State (the Parabe platform raid of 28 May 1998) and that of about five persons at Ikeyan/Opia in Warri North Local Government Area on January 4, 1999. Their excuse is that they work in partnership with the State and that it is the duty of the State to provide security. Chevron's preferred place of meeting with the communities is the army barracks. Tells something about their idea of dialogue.

## **COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

Transnational oil corporations in Nigeria have raised "Community Relations" to mean corruption of segments of the society and the creation of an idle or standby "workforce" which sometimes act as some sort of vigilante groups and distort the local economy. The massive amounts mentioned on the balance sheets do not match the realities on the ground as studies (by the Environmental Rights Action and others) have shown.

## **ISSUES FOR SUSTAINING CIVIL LIFE AND ENVIRONMENT**

The Niger Delta has not always been what it is, or is shown to be, today. The land was once fertile; fishes thickly populated the rivers. The hard working people were rich, healthy and happy.

A network of taboos, sacred groves and beasts jealously guarded the ecosystem. They were prime examples of sustainable societies.

With the advent of oil exploration, exploitation and politics, the land, sea and air of the Niger Delta have been despoiled to unimaginable degrees. The people are now hungry, diseased, oppressed and marginalised. Their economic and social life has been distorted. Their lands and waterways have become barren. For the sake of future generations of Nigerians, this trend must be halted and reversed.

The future of Nigeria will be determined by how the agitation in the Niger Delta communities is resolved. The scenario is clear for all to see. 90% of all revenue generated in Nigeria comes from this area. This same area represents the most neglected parts of the country. Steps to eliminate the glaring poverty and misery in the Niger Delta will send a signal to other areas of the country that the discoveries of other resources in their own backyard do not spell doom for them. The recovery of the Niger delta will signal the recovery of Nigeria.

- Empowerment of civil groups to focus on issues of civil life, forming alliances on agreed positions for greater effect.
- Communities to insist on control of resources found in their territories.
- Exchange of information, materials and experiences between groups working on similar issues as a veritable means of education.
- Rejection of political restrictions such as the requirement of registration before operating as a political party. Insistence on presentation of political platforms or issues as a means of receiving votes rather than the purchase of votes with cash or gifts.
- Encouragement of activities (such as co-operatives, rural banking and micro-credit) to raise the economic power of the people.
- The people know best how to interact with their environment. Lessons must be taken from them if the environment is to be cared for in a sustainable manner.

## Appendix D

The International Development Research Centre has also quite recently sent a team to Nigeria in order to begin to identify areas where they or other Canadian agencies could be helpful. Support to research systems through such means as connectivity and better access to information were seen as important by the team. Matters of governance as well as natural resource management were also given high priority by the team.

We in the Canadian government recognize that constitutional issues are of great importance to Nigeria. To the extent that constitutional arrangements ensure an equitable distribution of wealth among Nigeria's regions and peoples, they are a vital factor. By ensuring that government is inclusive, that it reflects the will and protects the rights of all Nigerians and by clarifying the lines of authority within the body politic, the Constitution can help to encourage accountability and honesty in government.

There is, however, a risk that attempts to improve constitutional arrangements may deteriorate into lengthy, sterile and divisive debates among specialists. If this should happen, their value will be negative as they consume time and national energies which could be devoted to urgent practical matters. In so doing they will further contribute to the sense of alienation now prevailing among much of Nigeria's population.

There is clearly much to be done in and for Nigeria. The Canadian government wishes to accompany Nigeria -- and we encourage Canadian civil society and business to do so as well -- as it pursues its path to democracy and sustainable development. Minister Axworthy has made it very clear that our objective is restoration of the broad and deep relationship between Canada and Nigeria that existed in the past. We are, like you, seeking the best ways to achieve this. The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade will be looking to work in partnership with CIDA and IDRC, and most importantly, with Canadian and Nigerian civil society and business partners to bring this about. We look forward to your suggestions and indeed to your very practical recommendations on how we might work together.

### Nigerian Priorities

As we see it, the most urgent task facing Nigeria is the need to bring these resources to bear on the desperate needs of the poor and middle classes. These needs are the result of a system which promotes instability and unrest in the country. These are the factors which in the past have tempted the military into intervention. They are the factors which place unmanageable burdens on the police and the judicial system. Despair, instability and unrest lead to that terrible affliction which so afflicts Nigerian society, corruption.

Working from these social evils requires the rebuilding and the building anew of institutions. An electoral system which can guarantee the kind of success that recently occurred, accountable legislative bodies at all levels; an effective judiciary, and security services which balance efficiency with respect for individual rights are some that come to mind.

The International Development Research Centre has also been recently set up in Ottawa in order to begin to identify areas where they or other Canadian agencies could be helpful. Support to research systems through such means as consultancy and better access to information were seen as important by the team. Matters of government as well as national resource management were also given high priority by the team. The team also stressed the need for a long-term perspective in the design of development projects. We in the Canadian government recognize that constitutional issues are of great importance to Nigeria. To the extent that constitutional arrangements create an equitable distribution of wealth among

Nigeria's various and people that are a vital factor. It is essential that government be inclusive and that it be able to represent the interests of all Nigerians and by clarifying the lines of authority within the government. The Government can help to encourage a more equitable and honest government. It is essential that the Government should be able to deal with the various groups and individuals who are active in the country. It is also essential that the Government should be able to deal with the various groups and individuals who are active in the country. It is also essential that the Government should be able to deal with the various groups and individuals who are active in the country.

positions for greater effect. - Committee report on control of resources in their territories. These are the main areas in which the Government should be able to help. We encourage Canadian civil society and business to take an active interest in Nigeria - and we encourage Nigerian civil society and business to take an active interest in Canada. We are like you, seeking the best ways to do this. The Department of International Trade will be working with you on this. We are like you, seeking the best ways to do this. The Department of International Trade will be working with you on this. We are like you, seeking the best ways to do this. The Department of International Trade will be working with you on this.

work together.



## Appendix D

### Remarks by the Director General, Africa Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ms. Sandelle D. Scrimshaw at the conference

#### "Democratic Transition in Nigeria: Canadian Foreign Policy Options"

Ottawa, April 14-15, 1999

#### Background

Relations between Canada and Nigeria have traditionally been excellent. When Nigeria achieved independence in 1960 Canada rejoiced at its prospects. That great country seemed destined to be an example to all Africa of a functioning, prosperous democracy. We were the more pleased because Nigeria was a fellow member of the Commonwealth.

It was not long before hopes for Nigeria turned to concern. Civilian leaders appeared unable or unwilling to handle the responsibilities of government and senior military officers took over. As years went on, this became the rule rather than the exception. Matters went from bad to worse culminating in the several years of repressive and corrupt rule under General Abacha.

#### Current Situation

Now at last Nigeria has been given a new opportunity to rebuild itself. This enormous task is above all the responsibility of Nigerian government and its people. No one but they can bring about the changes of attitude required by the task of economic and political reconstruction and renewal.

Nigeria has vast material resources, important as building blocks for prosperity. More important still are the human resources that Nigeria possesses. Highly qualified professional people with experience and contacts in the world outside; a literacy rate, among both men and women, which compares favourably with those of some more prosperous countries are but a couple of examples.

#### Nigerian Priorities

As we see it, the most urgent task facing Nigeria's elected leaders is that of bringing these resources to bear on the desperate needs of the poor and middle classes. Their present poverty leads to a sense of despair which promotes instability and unrest in the country. These are the factors which in the past have tempted the military into intervention. They are the factors which place unmanageable burdens on the police and the judicial system. Despair, instability and unrest lead to that terrible affliction which so undermines Nigerian society, corruption.

Breaking from these social evils requires the rebuilding and the building anew of institutions. An electoral system which can minimize the kind of abuses that recently occurred; accountable legislative bodies at all levels; an effective judiciary; and, security services which balance efficiency with respect for individual rights are some that come to mind.

Appendix D

Nigeria's leadership, both military and civilian, has largely ignored these issues in the past. If the newly elected leadership continues to ignore the basic needs of much of the country's population, then a great opportunity will have been missed and a new cycle of military takeovers and incompetent government will threaten.

The Nigerian government, Nigeria's dynamic, sophisticated civil society and its enterprising business community have a common interest: a stable, prosperous country. It is therefore in the government's interest to foster partnerships among these participants in public life.

### **Canadian Assistance**

While primary responsibility for bringing about improvement lies with Nigerian leaders and their people Nigeria's foreign friends can and should help. This is not only a matter of generosity toward a great nation and fellow Commonwealth member, it is in our own long term interest. A prosperous and democratic Nigeria can become a valued trading partner. It can be a partner in dialogue and action on a variety of issues ranging from environmental degradation to peacekeeping and human security.

Nigeria is a complex society and the Canadian government has had no representation at all there for a period of a year-and-a-half. Prior to that, during the time of General Abacha, the relationship had become largely unproductive. The Canadian International Development Agency felt constrained to withdraw from bilateral activity in Nigeria. As a result, and in order to be genuinely helpful in the present situation, officials of the Canadian government must place themselves on a steep "learning curve". Our objective will be to find the ways in which Canadian capabilities match Nigeria's most urgent needs.

During the dark years of the Abacha regime Canada, through CIDA, continued to assist Nigeria with Democratic Development Fund projects administered by CUSO, Inter-Church Action and the Canadian Labour Congress. The DDF reserve was used for small projects. More recently we have assisted with the elections.

CIDA recognizes the Canadian foreign policy interest in Nigeria and the importance for Canada to assist Nigeria during this transition and the even more critical post-transition period. With this in mind, CIDA will send, by mid-year, a programming mission to Nigeria. They will be examining partnership, multilateral and bilateral channels as well as a variety of programme possibilities. The latter could include activities such as: financing initiatives designed specifically to address the needs of the poorest; supporting Canadian institutions and firms through partnership programs like INC; or, exposing new Nigerian parliamentarians to Canadian democratic parliamentary processes and working with civil society to strengthen the foundations upon which democracy can be sustained.

Given the Agency's, and indeed the Government's, commitment to consultation, I know that CIDA will welcome suggestions from this group on how we should focus or orient our future development cooperation with Nigeria.

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