

THE IMPACT OF AFRICAN REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS ON YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND SECURITY DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria's society is naturally blessed with abundant human and material resources such as land, mineral and water. According to the National Youth Population Commission (NPC, 2013), youth constituted a large proportion of the Nigeria human resources. The level of development whether economic or socio-political attained by any country depends largely on the extent to which enormous potentials of its resources are harnessed by the government. The main objective of this paper is to examine the relationship between youth empowerment policies and programmes and national security development in Nigeria. The "Youth bugle theory" by Gunnar (1990), was used as a framework for the study. The theory argues that a large youth population is prelude to instability and civil unrest. A Desk research method was used using content analysis technique with data drawn from secondary sources. It identified various social, educational, economic and political components needed to achieve holistic youth empowerment that can lead to effective national security development in Nigeria. It equally highlighted barriers to effective youth empowerment and how it can lead to increased insecurity challenges in Nigeria. Security of lives and properties remained the fundamental duties of government and the backbone to economic and socio-political development. The paper concluded that Youth empowerment remained one of the major determinants of a country's level of security development. Thus, instruments of the "Human Rights-Based Approach" to youth empowerment were recommended in order to provide sustainable national security development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Youth, Empowerment, Security, Development

Introduction

The insecurity challenges in Nigeria have assumed a frightening dimension that requires a government and multi-stakeholder approach, as it constitutes a threat to Nigeria's statehood. The level of development attained by any country in the world is a function of security development of that particular country; the way and manner in which lives and properties are protected to achieve peace and harmony. Threats to national security differ from country to country and are both internal and external in nature. However, different countries have adopted different strategies to achieve peace and security for their citizens. It is a generic assertion that youth in any society are known as the leaders of tomorrow. They play a crucial role in the prospect for development. The United Nation in 2007, adopted an international strategy namely the "world programme of action for youth for the year 2000 and beyond".

The essence of the initiative is to address more effectively the problems of the youth and to increase opportunities for their participation in society. Reasonable number of security challenges such as political crises, religious and tribal clashes, armed robbery, militancy as well as kidnapping was recorded in Nigeria from 1999 to date, across all the six geopolitical zones. Discoveries by researchers on conflict and crime in Africa identify the "youth factor" as a crucial machinery of such violence in almost all the regions. The bulk of these youth were, however, graduates and drop out of various educational institutions. African countries, Nigeria inclusive, were faced with social maladies, including unemployment, underemployment, illiteracy, hunger, poverty, drug abuse and moral decadence. Most alarming vices like corruption, selfishness and do-or-die style of governance interact to bring about easy access to

small arms, social and economic deprivation, marginalization and exposure to violence. The foregoing contributed to a laced and feared society in Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that this paper examined youth empowerment and how it relates to national security development in Nigeria.

Conceptual Exposition

Youth: the concept of youth has been defined by different scholars and organisations in different ways. Also, countries vary considerably in their definition of youth and childhood. The pan-African Youth Charter (2006) defines youth or young people as “every human being between the ages of 15 and 30 years”. The African Youth Charter (2011) defines youth; as individuals aged between 15 and 35. This corresponds with the English convention which classifies the period of youth as falling between the ages of 15 and 30 years (Awogbenle and Iwuamadi, 2010). The UN considers individuals under the age group of 15 – 24 as youths. In Uganda, for example, youth is from 12 to 30 years, while in Nigeria, it is between 18 and 35 years (ILO, 2005). In general, over 200 million Africans are now officially designated as youths (that is, aged between 15 and 24). This youth generation is the largest the world has ever known. More than 60 percent of the population in many UNDP programme countries are youth aged 15-24 (UNDP 2017).

Youth Empowerment: According to Isa and Vambe (2013), empowerment is commonly used to refer to a widely participatory process of directed social change in a society, intended to bring about social and material advancement including greater equality, freedom, and other valued qualities for the majority of the people through their gaining greater control over their environment. NEPAD (2015) highlighted empowerment as any operational action plan/programme intended by the government, organization or group of people to improve capacity and productivity of an individual or group of individuals. Africana (2011) was of the view that young people are empowered when they realise that they can create choices in life, are aware of the implications of those choices, make informed decisions freely, take action based on those decisions and accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions. The African Youth Charter Plan of Action also defines Youth Empowerment as building knowledge and education through awareness raising, capacity and skills building. It equally means having the ability for supporting enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others.

According to Isah and Vambe (2013), development refers to the unending process of qualitative and quantitative transformation in the capacity of a national entity to organize the process of production and distribution of the material benefits of a society. This is in a manner that sustains improvement in the well-being of its members, positive transformation and sustenance of their society and humanity at large. On the other hand, Youth empowerment is the ongoing processes in which youths are engaged to meet their basic personal and social needs and to be safe, valued, useful and spiritually grounded. It is also a process which prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent (Africana, 2011).

National Security

According to Samuel and Deinibitein (2018), there is no single universally accepted definition of what constitutes national security. Rather, it is an all-encompassing condition which suggests that a territory must be secured by a network of armed forces; that the sovereignty of the state must be guaranteed by a democratic and patriotic government, which in turn must be protected by the military, police and the people themselves; that the people must not only be secured from external attacks but also from devastating consequences of internal upheavals such as unemployment, hunger, starvation, diseases, ignorance, homelessness, environmental degradation and pollution cum socio-economic injustices. The US Legal (2016) note that the concept of national security encompasses economic security, monetary security, military security, political security and security of energy and natural resources. In a more specific form, Iredia (2011) define national security as the ability of a state to overcome any of its challenges

no matter what the challenges are. More related to youth empowerment, the Commission on Human Security (2003) asserts that, Human security means: using processes that build on people's strength and aspirations, creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity.

Sustainable Security Development: This is a form of security development in which the needs and aspirations of the present generation is protected without depriving the needs and aspirations of the future generation from being protected. In other words, the process of enlarging people's choices by expanding their capabilities and opportunities in ways that are sustainable from the economic, social and environmental standpoints benefiting the present without compromising the future (UNDP 2014).

To achieve sustainable security development, Nigeria needs to be secured in three (3) key dimensions:

1. Economically; economic security involves the efficient utilisation of the national productive resources to attain productive efficiency; the efficient utilisation of resources to raise productivity as a means of attaining locative efficiency; the provision of sufficient food and fibre of adequate quantity to attain consumptive efficiency; the enhancement of income- employment opportunities to attain goals of equity and distributive efficiency.
2. Socially; social security emphasized on policy development, coordination and management, programme finance and implementation, advocating for the wellbeing of citizens by having access to education, health facilities and employment and promoting the cause of the disadvantaged citizens.
3. Politically; good governance devoid of ethnic, regional or religious sentiments facilitates harmony, security and peace. It equally lays solid background for sustainable political, social and economic development in the Country.

Components of Holistic and Sustainable Youth Empowerment

The African Youth Charter 2009-2018 Plan of Action (2011) highlighted these enabling conditions under the economic and social base to achieve sustainable youth empowerment in Africa: 1) political will, 2) access to knowledge, information and skills, 3) adequate resource allocation and supportive legal and administrative frameworks, 4) a stable environment of equality, peace, democracy and positive value system. The enormous benefits young people can contribute are realised when investment is made in young people's education, employment, health care, empowerment and effective civil participation. Several initiatives on youth education and employment have been undertaken in Africa, but these need to be deepened in order to exploit the full potential of young people in contributing to poverty reduction, sustainable development and ultimately, the transformation of the African continent (NEPAD 2015). It can therefore be inferred from the above, that the concept of youth empowerment transcends economic motives as may be perceived for employment generation. It incorporates other forms of human development such as qualitative education, health care, mental as well as morality development.

Cross Section of Youth Empowerment Programmes in Nigeria

In Nigeria, several empowerment initiatives were put in place by the governments since 1986. Some programmes were concerned with skill acquisition and capacity building, while others targeted on the provision of credit facilities for every citizen willing and able to create new business or develop existing one in the country. Such programmes includes among others: the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWIN) and the ongoing N-Power programme of present administration. In the area of business activities, the Small and Medium Enterprises Equity Investment Scheme (SMEEIS), the N200 billion Small and Medium Scale Enterprises Guarantee Scheme (SMSEGS), the N200 billion SME Restructuring/Refinancing Fund, the N100 billion Cotton, Textile and

Garment (CTG) Fund and the N2 billion National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND) were established by the federal government through the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to give opportunities for the creation and management of micro, small and medium scale enterprises. It is equally aimed at providing an enabling platform for youth to access credit facilities, acquire skills, create opportunities for job placement, employment counseling and enhanced community development.

In the area of education, government through the Federal Ministry of Education was able to introduce Entrepreneurship Education Courses coupled with establishment of Entrepreneurship Development Centres in all tertiary education institutions in Nigeria. This is to inculcate spirit of innovation, creativity and self-reliance in the minds of students to become job creators and not job seekers after graduation.

Security, Justice and Growth (SJG) Programme; Between 2002-2010 Nigeria through SJG programme partnered with the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) in working to realise the values, principles and goals contained in the United Nations Millennium Summit Declaration: peace, security, development, poverty eradication, human rights, democracy, good governance, protecting the vulnerable and meeting the special needs of Africa. The interventions are aimed at enhancing safety and security, building the capacity of the key institutions to institutionalise and sustain the culture of respect for the rule of law, upholding the rule of law, monitoring institutional activities and ensuring a pro-poor approach to safety and security in Nigeria. The work covers community policing, informal policing structures (IPS), and conflict prevention and management. In this regard, it has been working with the police on community policing, providing capacity building for informal policing structures and strengthening institutional capacity towards conflict prevention, management and resolution (DFID 2006).

Youth Empowerment Strategies for Africa by some International Organizations

The UNDP Youth Strategy 2014-2017 provided three (3) strategies for youth empowerment:

Sustainable development pathways; this involved increased empowerment of youth to eradicate poverty and reduce socio-economic inequality and exclusion as well as to enhance youth employment, employability and entrepreneurship.

Inclusive and effective democratic governance; this is by promoting inclusive and effective engagement of youth in planning and decision making processes at local, national, regional and global levels for sustainable solutions to youth poverty, inequality and exclusion.

Resilience Building; 'Resilience' refers to the capacity of young men and women, communities, institutions, and countries to anticipate, prevent, recover from, and transform in the aftermath of shocks, stresses and change. Key issues in resilience are recovery from conflict-induced crises, stronger ability to prepare for and deal with the consequences of natural disasters, and capacity to adapt to change.

NEPAD (2015) in its preparation and design of the African Continental Framework on Youth Development in collaboration with governments, development partners and civil society organizations came up with the following plans:

1. NEPAD Agency, AUC and UNDP worked on an African Continental Framework on Youth Development to address the challenges of African Youth;
2. Ten (10) countries, namely Senegal, Cabo Verde, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Egypt, Tanzania, Ethiopia, South Africa, Rwanda, Nigeria, were selected as pilot countries that was covered by the task team to design continental framework from October 2015 to May 2016;
3. A first draft of the framework was completed and presented to Head of States and Government of Countries (HSGOC) at the AU summit in January 2016.

4. When all the remaining 8 countries were covered a validation workshop that brought together member States and key stakeholders was organized to validate the final draft framework.
5. The approved framework was later submitted to HSGOC for their endorsement in June 2016.
6. After the endorsement of the framework, Nepad Agency, in collaboration with member States embarked on a programme of domestication of the framework in the development plans of member States.

The consultations in the selected 10 countries led to the technical validation of mission reports and design of the African Continental Framework on Youth Development with operational action plans. The operational action plans include a roadmap indicating the direct, indirect, and or shared responsibilities of different actors, among which governments, private sectors, civil society organizations, academia, development partners within a public-private partnership framework mutualize their efforts to the advantage of youth development at the national, sub-regional and continental levels.

However, UNDP (2017) provided another strategy for youth empowerment in Africa which it refers to as “Human Rights–Based Approach”:

1. Decent work e.g. addresses structural barriers that young people face in the labour market.
2. Freedom of opinion, expression and association e.g. support youth organizations, networks and movements for civic engagement.
3. Health e.g. guarantees access to treatment and care for young people affected by HIV/AIDS.
4. Education e.g. promotes the right of young people to learn in a safe and secured environment.
5. Inclusion e.g. supports legal reforms to fight discrimination and ensure that youth have access to remedy and justice.
6. Gender equality e.g. promotes equal opportunity for young women to participate in political processes.
7. Participation e.g. includes young people in peace building efforts.

Youth Development Index by some African Countries

UNDP Youth strategy 2014-2017 highlighted youth development indices adopted by some African countries with the objective of measuring the progress of youth development. An index has been used as benchmark to monitor the impact of programme interventions on youth well-being, empowerment or the variety of barriers they are facing – depending on its construction. Egypt for instance adopted a Youth Well-being Index, which measures various dimensions of progress, such as education, employment, poverty, security, gender aspects, participation, ICT access etc. Kenya constructed a Youth Development Index based on the Human Development Index but adjusted its definition of youth. Somalia presented a Youth Frustration Index that includes social aspects such as lack of family support, drug abuse or feelings of humiliation, gathering this data for the first time through a survey (UNDP 2014).

Barriers to effective Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

The work of Isah and Vambe (2003) highlighted a number of factors considered to be peculiar impediments to youth empowerment and development in most African Countries including Nigeria. These factors include among others:

Lack of qualitative education: Although many policies have been introduced to provide free and compulsory schooling, education has remained expensive for the average household because of non-tuition costs such as uniforms, books, and transportation. As a result many of the current youth cohorts have been unable to complete a basic primary education, which is considered the minimum level required to function in the society as documented in the World Youth Report (2007).

Girl child discrimination: Gender norms and bias ingrained in educational and economic policies and structures limit the social, economic and political contributions of girls and young women. They are left vulnerable to physical, sexual and psychological harm by the men in their families and communities seriously curtailing their violation to involve in socio-economic endeavors.

Unemployment and Underemployment: An unemployed individual usually lives a life of penury and deprivation since he/she has no means of sustaining him or herself, and consequently cannot satisfy his/her basic needs. Such an individual is vulnerable and can easily be manipulated by others in a position to meet his or her needs or even a mere promise of a better and fulfilling life.

Globalization and Digital divide: Young people in Africa both suffer and benefit from the process of globalization. On the one hand, they are flexible enough to use the new opportunities it offers. On the other hand, many of them lack the skills they need to benefit from these new opportunities. The digital divide, characterized by unequal access to ICT, is a major problem for many young people in Africa today. To others it had served as a flat form for learning immorality and all sorts of unethical behaviours.

Limited role in data collection, information and research on issues affecting youth: Though governments at continental, regional and national levels in Africa are doing their best in this aspect, young people were observed to be directly or indirectly excluded from the information and data collection processes on issues concerning the African youth. This information asymmetry leads to incomplete data and bias conclusions.

Socio-political crises: Injustice, corruption and opposition to specific governmental policies by political and social sectors were the main causes for socio-political crises. During 2009, 76 socio-political crises scenarios in the world were reported with 26 cases taking place in Africa and 22 in Asia. The rest of the socio-political crises were located in Europe (13 cases), Middle East (9) and America (6). On a global level, most of the crises were recorded as medium or low intensity. Only 11 cases were labeled high intensity including Ethiopia, the Ethiopian region of Oromia, Guinea, Sudan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Iran, the Chinese province of Eastern Turkestan, Peru and Dagestan.

National Security Development in Nigeria

Over a decade, national security development became a threat to the economic and socio-political development in Nigeria. Youth were discovered to be prime actors in the insecurity challenges emanated from almost every part of the country. Take a look back into the activities of Odua Peoples' Congress (OPC) in the South-West during the early time of the third Republic: Niger Delta Militancy, Piracy and oil bunkering in the South-South, Biafra agitation in the South-East and Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East during the YarÁdua, Jonathan and Buhari administration. Others include Kidnapping, Armed Robbery, and Ethno-Religious crises as well as so called Farmers-Herdsmen clashes in the North-Central and North-Western parts of the Country. These crises claimed thousands of lives and properties worth billions of naira in Nigeria.

To restore security and peace, lump sum of Nigeria financial resources was sank yearly in the supply of weapons, training and payment of security personnel. Osakwe (2013) disclosed that in the 2012 budget of the Federal Government of Nigeria a little less than one trillion Naira was budgeted for security. Similarly, the pattern of budgetary allocation to youth empowerment, development and physical security did not change much in the 2016 national budget. Thousands of youth were recruited in the police, military and paramilitary to curve out high level of youth unemployment and to improve security strength of the nation as well. Osakwe (2013), further asserted that there is a strong relationship between youth employment and national security in Nigeria.

Different operation strategies such as "Operation Lafiya Dole", "Operation Pulo Shield," "Operation Python Dance", "Operation Crocodile Smile", "Operation Kunama", "Operation Dirar Mikiya" and "Operation Sharan Daji" were adopted by the joint military groups to combat insecurity challenges at the Niger-Delta, South-East, Middle Belt, North -East and North-West regions. A lot of successes were recorded in most parts of the regions but the situation is taking different dimension in the other parts.

Conclusion

Myriad of studies and literature recognized the fact that youth formed greater portion of the Nigerian society. Considering the vast endowed natural resources in Nigeria, youth if fully empowered and effectively utilized can serve as machinery to achieving high level of economic growth and national security development. From the study, the paper discovered that youth were directly or indirectly used to fuel crimes and violence across all parts of the Country. Government at federal, state and local level had concerted efforts through various policies and programmes to empower youth as a means to restore peace and stability for national security development. Equally, multinational as well as civil society organizations such as the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS), Pan – Africa Youth Union (PYU), United Nation (UN), African Union Commission (AUC) and lots of others have concerted efforts to ensuring youth empowerment to curtail the Nigerian security challenges.

Examination of conceptual exposition however, revealed that these problems may be directly or indirectly consequent to leadership problems, activities of over-ambitious and unpatriotic political groups as well as numerosity of barriers that hindered effective youth empowerment policies' implementation. These had however, made the security challenges lingered for about two decades in the Country.

Recommendations

In view of the foregoing, the paper recommended that the Head of State and Government of Nigeria should design agenda to articulate regional common priorities, opportunities and challenges to facilitate holistic youth empowerment that can help provide improved and sustained security development in Nigeria as follows:

1. Education; Promote the right of young people to have equal access to and completion of a minimum of nine years of formal education.
2. Structural economic transformation and inclusive growth; the need to promote an integrated economy that nurtures inter-sectoral synergies, linkages and job growth; this will address the problem of unemployment, minimize income and wealth disparities, and alleviate poverty among the teeming youth population in Nigeria.
3. Diversification, industrialization and value addition; In achieving this, government need to develop the private sector and strengthen the productive capacity of the informal sector to ensure a more active participation of youth in contribution to industrialization and value-addition.
4. Enhance Police Community Relation policing to provide the environment in which the police and law abiding citizens can work together to prevent crime and bring offenders to justice.
5. Tighten the border security and strengthen security network with the neighbouring countries and International Security Agencies.
6. Arrest and prosecute manufactures of local weapons as well as their sponsors.

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