

## THE NEED FOR TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURAL RESTRUCTURING IN NIGERIA: A STEP TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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### Abstract

The study focused on the transport infrastructural repositioning as a veritable approach for sustainable development. It is our perception that the benefits associated with improved transport infrastructure have a magic wand for improving employment of resources, income generation and poverty reduction. The expository study revealed that the government of Nigeria since after independence has made series of attempts to develop the transportation sector, and so channeled resources at the sub-sector at different periods in time but yet to attain the level necessary to ensure efficient resources mobility and desirable development intention. From the study, it is the conviction of the authors that sufficient investment in transport infrastructure in all the nooks and cranny of the country is imperative for creation of adequate capacity utilization, effective inputs and outputs circulation at the various points of needs, which would raise employment, productivity and income generation that is capable of reducing developmental bottle-neck in the country. Consequently, among the suggested ways to encourage transport infrastructure restructuring are: dredging of rivers and waterways in the country for easy movement should be practically and vigorously pursued; the government has to open doors to both domestic and foreign private investors in this sector and curtail cost of governance; Nigerian professionals in Diaspora should be co-opted to assist the country with technical knowledge, funding, direct and indirect support.

**Keywords:** development, infrastructure, restructure, sustainable, transport

### INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is one of the most populous countries in Africa with a population of 169, 282 million (Economic Watch, 2013) and operates a federal system of government and a mixed economic system. It has 36 states and a federal capital territory. The country is divided into six geo-political zones with 774 local government areas. The country has average population density of 148 persons per sq km. The highest population densities are in the Igbo heartland in South Eastern Nigeria, despite poor soils and heavy emigration (Stock, 2008). The country was mainly an agrarian economy prior to and after independence until the discovery of oil in commercial quantity, which led to the exodus of the work force from agricultural sector to the new oil sector coupled with government much focused attention on oil, which gradually reduced needed efforts on agriculture. At present the major source of federal government revenue is the oil sector. The country is rated the 12th largest producer and 8th largest exporter of petroleum, and proven to be the 10th largest possessor of oil reserve. The development of the economy hinges so much on oil, contributing 40% of the gross domestic product and 80% of aggregate government revenue (The World Bank, 2011; Babatunde et al, 2012).

The country has many ethnicities with over 200 cultures and many languages. The lingua franca is English due to British colonial influence. The country has over the years battled with reform and development and as such came up with reasonable capital expenditure allocation on

transportation infrastructure and industrial establishment. The desire for transportation infrastructural repositioning compelled the pioneer leaders to design developmental plans which allocated significant capital expenditure on transport infrastructure. This is because the leaders understood the economic benefits associated with improved transportation, and so aspired to improve the sector through capital allocation.

Table 1: Share of planned public sector expenditure on transportation sector percentage 1962-1998

Plan	Plan period	Transport sector share (%)
First National Development Plan	1962-68	21.3
Second National Development Plan	1970-74	23.7
Third National Development Plan	1975-80	22.2
Fourth National Development Plan	1981-85	15.2
First National Rolling Plan	1990-93	11.6
Second National Rolling Plan	1994-96	8.6
Third National Rolling Plan	1996-98	10.1

Source: Onokala (2012)

The above table depicts efforts over the years to improve on transportation infrastructure in the country with a view to increase economic activities. However, in spite of all efforts, prior to year 2000, the transport infrastructure situation in Nigeria was generally poor, thereby debilitating the noble intention to reshape the transportation network and the economy. Federal

Republic of Nigeria (2000) points that the deplorable state of Nigerian road, rail, air and water transport have been so alarming that some regions were cut off, especially the rural areas as many villages were isolated while a good number had been isolated without link roads to the rest of the country, and so the various mode of transportation have not been properly and sufficiently linked, thereby retarding developmental aspiration. This situation does not encourage proper resources mobility, given that the extent of resources mobility is a measure of development.

### STUDY MOTIVATION

This study is motivated by the debility and the deplorable state of the country's transport infrastructure, and in consideration of its linkage effects to every facet of the economy, which its repositioning acts as a catalyst for sustainable development of Nigerian economy. Just as Oyesiku et al (2013) posits that transport has the inert ability for developmental stimulus in the sense that it supports interregional spread of economic activities and geographical variations in unemployment, income and migration. This implies that revamping transport infrastructure has the tendency to vary the level of economic activities capable of raising aggregate resource utilization, reduce unemployment and increase income generation required to alleviate the poverty situation.

In Nigeria today, the insufficient investment in transport infrastructure, among others, in various nook and cranny of the country has played significant role in perpetrating poverty situation and low level of development over the years. When a large proportion of rural areas in the country are not linked with other regions in the country, it becomes a serious constraint in evacuation of local outputs, movement of capital and labour, in and out of the areas. The positive effects of mobility of resources would not be achieved, and consequently damnify poverty alleviation intention. Ighodaro (2009) points out that deficiency of good road project, which is an important aspect of transportation in Nigeria clearly contributes to poverty alleviation. So, revamping the ugly trend has the potentiality of improving the living situations of the inhabitants and also augments the chances available for trade and employment. In the World Bank survey of poverty situation in some developing countries, realised that one of the causes of poverty is unemployment. It is believed that improved transportation infrastructure has the ability to raise employment, thereby reducing poverty.

Poor transport infrastructure as it is experienced in Nigeria over the years encourages unemployment and poverty. When a large proportion of the people are handicapped from working and earning income due to lack of capital overheads to encourage them, their living standard will deteriorate. The National Bureau of Statistics (2006) estimated population in poverty in 1980 is 65million, 75million in 1985; in 1992, 91.5 million while in 1996 it was 102.3 million. The rise in poverty in the country is really worrisome notwithstanding the poverty alleviation programmes and policies over the years. Ogwumike (2002) points out that the rise in poverty has not been encouraging in the sense that

poverty rose from 27% in 1980 to 46% in 1985, which is almost 100% increase; it fell slightly to 42% in 1992, but skyrocketed to 67% in 1996. By 1999, estimated poverty level was over 70%. This compelled the federal government to intensify efforts to address poverty. However, in 2004, few years after the civilian regime, poverty came down to 54%. The low investment in industries and transportation infrastructure has played significant role in the inability of the poverty alleviation programmes to have significantly impacted on the economy. At present, the economy is still among the poorest economies of the world, notwithstanding the claim to be the giant of Africa.

Restructuring the transport infrastructure is hoped to play tremendous role in stimulating efficient and effective resources mobilization in the country, so as to increase employment, accessibility of productive resources, repositioning trade and commerce, increase productivity and outputs, better income generation disposition and discernable poverty reduction. In this respect, the broad objective of this study is to unravel how increased investment in transport infrastructure in Nigeria has the propelling force of alleviation of poverty and economic development, other things being equal.

The study is useful in the sense that the country is aspiring seriously to meet the millennium development goal by the year 2015 and as such it is believed that the outcome of the study will play significant role in intensifying efforts in extending investment in transport infrastructure in all the facets of the economy which is expected to help tremendously to enhance development and poverty reduction.

So, the paper is streamlined thus: section one focuses on transportation infrastructure situation : an overview; the nexus between poverty alleviation and transportation infrastructure is discussed in section two while section three proffers way forward for restructuring transportation infrastructure in Nigeria and conclusion.

### TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE SITUATION IN NIGERIA: AN OVERVIEW

The major problems of Nigerian transport system include among others; bad roads network; inadequate fleets of buses and trucks; irregular, insufficient and overcrowded trains and airplanes and congested ports. Besides, there exists scarcity of suitably-trained transport managers and planners, capital investment difficulty, problems of institutional reforms and ineffective traffic regulations. Due to these challenges, the share of transport in the gross domestic product has been very low, and a paltry 3% (<http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/pages/download/29>). This situation has never helped the pursuant of accelerated economic development in emerging Nigeria economy and has created abnormal defects in resources distribution and rendered many people deformed and some death due to road accidents and plan crash.

Undoubtedly, the government of Nigeria has in various ways played unqualified roles to reposition transport infrastructure in Nigeria. This intention has been incorporated in the various National developmental and

rolling plans. Every government that has piloted the affairs of the country has in one way or the other attempted to improve on transportation infrastructure. However, the sector is still far from the desired level of development capable of speedy acceleration of economic development of the country.

FRN (2000) points out that Nigeria had about 195,500km road network all over the country. Out of the whole, a proportion of about 32,000km are federal roads while 31,000km are state roads. A large proportion of these roads are so poor due to insufficient investment and lack of adequate maintenance. The four classifications of Nigerian roads are: the federal trunk 'A' roads, owned, managed and controlled by the federal government. Trunk 'F' was initially under the management of the state, but was taken over by the federal government with the intention to ensure its upgrading to federal highway standard and adequate maintenance. Trunk 'B' roads are owned by the state who develop and maintain it while trunk 'C' roads are under the local government ownership and control. Each of the levels of government shared the responsibility of planning, construction and maintenance of roads in each respective domain. This arrangement is to ensure even development of the entire country (Ighodaro, 2009; CBN 2003). Disgustingly, lack of adequate investment has made these roads very poor, and as such has retarded the level of resources mobility over the years, which is associated with economic backwardness effects, in terms of inefficient mobility of inputs of production and low income generation.

The country's present infrastructure situation has been pointed by Sanusi (2012) as one of the main factor debilitating the achievement of the aspired nation's vision of being one of the largest economies in the year 2020. Besides, the road network of the country is highly poor as about 70% of 193,000 kilometers of roads are in a deplorable condition. However, he also notes that Nigeria is currently allocating 7% of her gross domestic product on infrastructure, which is relative above average in Sub-Saharan Africa, but this is not adequate to propel the economy to the desired level of development.

In October 1958, Nigerian Airways came on board as a Joint Venture between the Nigerian Government, Elder Dempster Lines and British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC). This put to an end the operation of West African Airways Corporation (WAAC) that has functioned as commercial aircraft in the country since 1946. After independence, in 1963, the Federal Government of Nigeria acquired the other part of the shares and Nigerian Airways became fully owned by Nigeria. The leaders gradually acquired aircrafts of various types aimed at improving domestic and international journeys. Many airports were built such as the Murtala Mohammad airport was built between 1975 and 1980. Actually, other airports were built between 1980s and 1990s, among which includes airports in Kano, Ilorin, Kaduna, Sokoto, Port Harcourt and Maiduguri to accommodate the largest international aircraft. Nigeria also allowed private operators and delve into Joint Venture with private UK-based Virgin Atlantic Airways.

Besides, the country spent heavily to develop aviation industry, establishment of Civil Aviation training Centre for the manpower needed to pilot the aviation industry (Ladan, 2012; Filani, 1983).

Besides, CBN (2009) reports that the reforms in the aviation industry, which commenced in 2007 were reinforced in 2009. International standards for commuters' safety have been aspired vigorously by various bodies in aviation industry such as Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), Nigerian Airspace Management Authority (NAMA) and the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA). Actually, expenditure in this sector over the years has not been enough to achieve all aspired. For instance, there is still inability to tackle Air Traffic Control radar failures, air misses and non-complaint search and rescue organization. The cases of incessant plane crash in the country are associated with lack of adequate facilities to ensure hitch free movement and poor state of some crafts.

The rail transport in Nigeria is not left behind since after independence. The rail system in Nigeria consists of 3 feet 6 inches narrow-gauge single track lanes extending from South-West to North-East and from South-East to North-West. East-West link was not in the link. Some states and Federal Capital Territory was exempted from the link in rail network. Rail system in Nigeria has not experience adequate attention like roads and airways, and so it has remained underdeveloped with out-modeled tracks, outdated signaling system and facilities. Out of the total 280 railway stations in the country, only 50% remained functional as at 2000. As such, only very few passengers could be attended (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2000). The regime of Obasanjo in 2000 articulated some strategies and measures aimed at revamping the sub-sector, which includes, among others, the intention to refurbish and rehabilitate the Nigerian Railway Corporation's equipments and facilities; commercialization of the Nigerian Railway Corporation and encouragement of private sector participation in rail operation in the country. CBN (2009) reports that the government increased attention on the Nigeria railway in 2009. The suspended modernization of railway line in 2008 was resuscitated in 2009. Contract for the first phase was awarded for the construction of 186km single track standard gauge railway lines from Abuja to Kaduna at a cost of US\$875million, of which over 50% to be provided by the Chinese Government as concessional loan. In addition, Lagos-Kano railway modernization project got more attention and a repackaging of the project into five segments thus: Lagos-Ibadan; Ibadan-Ilorin; Ilorin-Minna, Abuja-Kaduna and Minna-Kano. Apart from improvement of facilities and construction of bridges and culverts, government acquired 25 brand new locomotives engines. The railway sub-sector received boost aimed at improving resources mobility.

The relegation of the railway lines is attributed to the transportation policy which overlooked and sidelined a very useful and cheap means of transport required to encourage the growth and development of privately-owned long haulage transport services, which would have assisted revamp the sub-sector. The prevailing

transportation policy made the sub-sector a lame duck that relied absolutely on the government subvention, and brought about a disorganized, unregulated private sector-owned road transport system supplying freight and passengers services, which resulted into traffic congestion in urban roads; raised rate of fatal accidents due to bad roads, poorly maintained vehicles and careless driving and increased the problem of environmental pollution, which could have been avoided (<http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/pages/download/29>).

The disregard of railways in Nigeria changed the attitude of passengers to mainly the use of road transport, and so all freights movements were channeled to the road movement, thereby increasing the traffic congestion in Nigerian roads with associated hazards. However, the Central Bank of Nigeria (2009) reported that the performance of the Nigerian railways on functional routes improved greatly in 2009 by 20%, given that 2.396million passengers were carried when compared with the 1.996million conveyed in 2008, and cargo mobility also rose by 18%.

Water transport in Nigeria is limited to the areas surrounded by water. It is frequent in use by those living in the water-side and has an average share of about 1.6 percent of Nigeria's gross domestic product. Water transport involves both local and international movement. Locally water transport includes conveyance of passengers or freight over water, operations of tour, excursion, cruise or sight-seeing boats, ferries and water taxis. Sea and coastal water transport ensure transportation of passengers or freight through rivers, canals, harbours, creeks and lakes. Nigeria's water transportation has remained largely undeveloped. There exist about 3,300km navigable inland waterways which suppose provide easy movement and access to the coast from the hinterland. Unfortunately, the inland waterways have remained unnavigable due to lack of sufficient dredging and lack of modern river cruising vessels. Poor infrastructure in the existing seaports in Nigeria has impeded large vessels from getting to it. The efforts of the government to dredge some of the sea ports and reform them are yet to achieve meaningful results; hence water transport in Nigeria is far from development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2000; <http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/pages/download/29>).

#### **THE NEXUS BETWEEN TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AND POVERTY**

Poverty alleviation requires reduction of inequality in rural and urban transportation infrastructural distribution. Poverty reduction or eradication has gained relatively good attention in recent time. The attack on poverty has called for diversifications and vigorous pursuance of actions in some priority sectors such as education, health, financial institutions, civil service and infrastructure. The existence of capital overheads is a pre-requisite for changes in productivity that is capable of improving income generation needed to escape from poverty. Mwabu (2004:2) informed that poverty is really a complex human phenomenon associated with unacceptable standard of living. This implies that poverty

needs to be addressed from various angles possible to bring the affected back to an acceptable living standard.

Actually, poverty is difficult to define due to its multifaceted, multidimensional and variation of living standard in different countries. Igbuzor (2004) in his reference to National Policy on Poverty Eradication sees poverty as a condition of not having enough to eat, poor drinking water, poor nutrition, unfit housing, a high rate of infant mortality, a low life expectancy, low educational opportunities, inadequate health care, lack of productive assets, lack of economic infrastructures and inability to actively participate in decision making process. Really, lack of economic infrastructure such as poor investment in transport infrastructure has in myriad ways retarded income generation considered essential in meeting those basic necessities of living. Transport difficulty in Nigeria has raised the prices of goods consumed by the poor. Glewwe (2005) posits that the economic well-being of the poor is influenced by the prices of goods and services they do consume.

Lipsey and Chrystal (2004) noted that the main issue facing poor countries is how to generate growth of income so that the standards of the population can be improved. This is one of the basic concept of government of every country devising means of earning income or raising national income to enable it sustain the economy. The situation of transport infrastructure has never helped the economy, especially in the rural areas where farm outputs are carried on the head from over twenty kilometres to homes or local markets for disposal.

Kakwani, et al (2004) stress that poverty reduction, and policies of redistribution of income and assets have become increasingly important, especially in developing economies. A policy agenda that addresses both distributional concerns and poverty reduction could lead to the enhancement of both economic growth/development and equity, thereby changing the living standard. The government has it as an obligation to promote and ensure economic and social well being of its people. This is done in a wide variety of ways that consist of policies and programmes focused on fiscal reforms, macroeconomic stability, increase in employment, education and training improvement, which helps to ensure a high standard of living (OECD 1997). Adequate application of a well designed policy on investment in transport infrastructure has a great potential of assisting in increasing aggregate income generation capable of repositioning the deformed economy.

Weisbrod and Weisbrod (1997) point out that there is no doubt that economic agents are interested in improving living standard and as such do perceive income rise as an important way to achieve that objective. The enhancement of transportation system is considered a better way of improving economic opportunities, quality of life and consequently, better income in the area. Efficient transport network enhances easy movement of varieties of inputs and outputs. Operators and consumers of transportation system earn income, thereby increasing

resources utilization which impacts positively on aggregate income generation of the country.

Air transport in Nigeria, although it is developing, but the number of airports is not sufficient for the population of the country. Air transport, just like water, railway and road transport in a locality creates different types of benefits such as providing job opportunities, tax revenues generation, makes for easy conveyance of varieties of inputs and outputs within and outside the territory and contributes to the gross domestic product (GDP). Besides, the connections created between cities, regions and markets show a significant infrastructure asset which brings relevant benefits that promotes foreign direct investment, business conglomerates, specialization and other positive externalities required for enhancing productive capacity of a country. For instance, the Nigeria aviation sector contributed 0.4% to the GDP, supports 159,000 jobs and pays over ₦8.5 billion in various taxes and other forms of taxes derivable from services offered (Oxford Economics, 2012).

These benefits could be more than that if sufficient air transport exists in the country. Actually, there is multiplier effect of such air transport investment in an area, in that it does bring about other investments such as hotels, artisans, business centres, private security agents and forms of businesses which in one way or the other cater for the main investment and impacting desirably to productivity. The contribution to gross domestic product and other benefits derivable is capable of raising the income generation of all economic agents in the country, thereby reducing unemployment, raising aggregate resources capacity utilization, further reposition income generation, enhancing economic activity and tackling poverty. Besides, the existence of air transport in area attracts tourists with its associated positive effects to the host community in form of increased demand of products and services.

Scholars have pointed that adequate infrastructure network connectivity has the advantage of ensuring easy access to historical cities and proximity to transport networks have a moderate positive causal effect on per capita gross domestic levels across sectors which shows that factor mobility within an economy plays significant role in determining the economic benefits of infrastructure development. This implies that revamping an economy in the quest for poverty reduction also necessitates sufficient investment in transportation infrastructure. From the aforementioned, it suggests that Nigeria has much to do in the transport infrastructure in virtually every state so as to reap the benefits of adequate infrastructure network connectivity.

#### **WAYFORWD FOR IMPROVING TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE**

Restructuring transport infrastructure can be said to be positively related to poverty alleviation considering the multiplier effect of its establishment in employment creation, productivity increase and income generation. The positive effect of the investment in the sector tends to reduce the number of people who do not earn income due

to upsurge of employment opportunities and assist in putting food on the table of many people. In this regard, we hereby pinpoint some of the ways that will help restructure transportation infrastructure in Nigeria.

(i) Dredging of rivers and waterways in the country for easy movement should be practical and vigorously pursued. In addition, air ports and railways need be pursued strongly. The federal, the state and local governments have to collaborate to ensure the realization of this intention. Procrastination has never helped a developing economy in any way. Obayelu (2007) posits that the importance of infrastructure for economic growth and development cannot be overemphasized. The poor state of electricity, transport and communications is a major handicap for doing business in Nigeria.

(ii) It is imperative for the government to open doors to foreign private investors in this sector. This is because capital has been considered a debilitating factor in infrastructural investment. But the caveat is that adequate and conducive environment has to be provided which must be highly beneficial and appealing considering other seekers of such international investment.

(iii) The government has to reduce cost of governance or recurrent expenditure and invest more on transport infrastructure which is capital intensive. This call for sacrifice and reform of the ways resources are allocated and utilized.

(iv) Resources managers must be sincere to themselves and guard against appropriating public funds for self at the expense of the society. This is one of the hallmarks for restructuring transport infrastructure given the antecedents of some leaders over the years, which led to the country being perceived as one of the most corrupt countries of the world by the Transparency International (2011). In similar vein, Uma and Eboh(2013) point that corruption is one of the greatest obstacles to the development of the Nigerian economy as it has brought about high level selfishness, misallocation, diversion and improper allocation of scarce resources.

(v) Nigerian professionals in Diaspora should be co-opted to assist the country with technical knowledge, funding, direct and indirect support in any way possible to restructure transport infrastructure. Also domestic investors can be encouraged to invest in road construction or other transport infrastructure provision and possibly recoup investment cost and profit through toll gates or other forms of taxes for a specific time period which consumers of the facilities will willingly pay.

(vi)The federal, state and local governments should intensify efforts in providing mass transportation to minimize the difficulty of traveling experiences by the people.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The paper has investigated the importance of adequate investment in transport infrastructure as a panacea for poverty alleviation. It was able to expose the defects of various transport sectors in the country and the efforts made since after independence to reform this important sector, yet much remain undone. Transportation infrastructure is grossly inadequate in Nigeria considering the number of people living in the country and the

available ones are in a deplorable state and lack maintenance. Really, the study has shown that the chain effects of improved transport infrastructure have a great power to create different development opportunities that are perceived to enhance efficient and effective resources mobilisation and utilization, which benefits economic agents in varieties of ways and thereby reposition employment, income generation and change the poverty trend.

The study has contributed to knowledge as it has exposed severe shortfall in transport infrastructure in Nigeria, and reaffirmed the fact that pursuant of development intention and poverty alleviation necessitates adequate investment in transport infrastructure, especially in the rural areas.

The status of Nigerian transport infrastructure during the period of military rule was far from satisfactory in spite of the sectoral allocation. A remarkable change came up as from the year 2000 during the regime of President Obasanjo. At present, although changes are going on as put in place by President Goodluck Jonathan but there is the need to intensify action on the part of the various tiers of the government to improve transportation infrastructure so as to encourage efficient, effective resources mobilization, poverty reduction and national development

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