

THE
NIGERIA
SYMPOSIUM
FOR
YOUNG
& EMERGING
LEADERS

THEME

TURNING THE *CURVE*:
ALIGNING GOVERNMENT POLICY TO OUR REALITIES

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A White Paper...

Presented by:



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ABOUT THE SYMPOSIUM:

The leadership question will continue to materialize in any conversation aimed at addressing the extant socio-economic disconnect in Nigeria. The annual Nigeria Symposium for Young and Emerging Leaders is one of such thought-provoking platforms where conversations are dialectically espoused with the aim of proffering actionable solutions.

We cannot overemphasize the subject of youth inclusiveness in all spheres of the political-economy, especially with the need to encourage their participation in policy-making process. Yet, there is a need for a dialogue on the role that young people will play in this new dispensation. How can young people begin to harness global opportunities that will engender national development for the collective?

Consequently, The Future Project hosted its fifth edition of the symposium, which also further complemented the media advocacy on www.YMonitor.org, which is directed at active citizenship and responsible governance. The dialogue entailed a new direction tailored towards local relevance and global competitiveness for young and emerging leaders.

Transparency remains an important issue in the Nigerian polity, and a key facet which defines any respectable government. Unfortunately, this is limited in the country, and there is an evident disconnect between the people and its government which constantly creates more tension in the country. Citizens are uncertain of their leaders, and the mixed outlooks create a lot of irregular responses.

The power of democracy is built on transparency and accountability, and when a government meant to be “Of the People, For the People and By the People” fails to deliver on its promise, it should be held responsible and accountable.

2019 THEME

TURNING THE *CURVE*:

ALIGNING GOVERNMENT POLICY TO OUR REALITIES

SINGLE OBJECTIVE

To lead a new conversation on government performance and citizens' social reality. This is achieved through a discourse that dissects the policy-making process and analyse reasons for the disconnect between policies and social realities. And by empowering citizens with information, they can take action to measure government performance based the social realities of the people.

The symposium was streamed live via ymonitor.org/live. It featured the following:

1. Robust exchange of ideas and knowledge in a TED-talk format focused on leadership and governance as well as the impact of policies on citizens.
2. Panel Sessions and Discussions



The symposium brought together public office holders, political leaders, ministers, civil society leaders, business leaders and many others to discuss the theme 'Turning the Curve: Aligning Government Policies to Citizens' Realities'.

Speakers at the forum include:

- **Rt. Hon. Rotimi Amaechi:**

Immediate past transportation minister and former governor of Rivers State.

- **Barrister Ismael Ahmed:**

Senior Special Adviser to the President on Social Investment.

- **Dennis Amachree:** *Former Assistant Director of State Security Service (SSS)*

- **Professor Remi Sonaiya:** *former president candidate, KOWA Party*

- **Ugochukwu 'Ruggedman' Stephens:** *musician, activist and UN Ambassador*

- **Asuquo Ekpenyong:** *former Commissioner for Finance, Cross River State*

- **Ndi Kato:**

political activist, advocate of female inclusion in government and politician

- **Udo Jude Ilo:** *Country Officer and Head of Nigeria Office, Open Society Initiative*

- **Commodore Omatseye Nesiana Rtd,** *security expert and analyst*

- **Leonard Ebute:** *public affairs analyst and supply chain expert*



L-R, Rotimi Amaechi, minister of Transportation, Sandra Ezekwesi; Prof Remi Sonaiya, Bukonla Adebakin; Chinwe Egwim, Economist; Asuquo Ekpenyong, Former commissioner of finance Cross River

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Arguably, security in Nigeria has never in such a perilous state. The government appears to be incompetent and indifferent, while the policies and tactics aimed at addressing the menace has completely failed.

Boko Haram killings ravage the Northeast; banditry is a challenge in the Northwest, the middle belt is affected by herdsmen killings while the south is plagued by the twin problem of kidnapping and herdsmen killings. Between 2016 – 2018, Amnesty International stated that 3,641 persons were killed in clashes between herdsmen and farmers . The organisation also claimed that 2,075 persons were killed in 2018 alone.

The Nigeria Security Tracker, a project of the Council on Foreign Relations reported that no fewer than 25,794 Nigerians may have died in violent crises during President Muhammadu Buhari's first term . The Inspector General of Police also revealed that a total of 685 people were kidnapped in the first quarter of 2019, while 79.8% of the national total kidnappings were recorded in the three northern geopolitical zones.

The collapse of the security apparatus is evident. The Federal Government of Nigeria has been unable to use the instrumentality of policy to address this situation, while the RUGA settlement policy, recently introduced to address the herdsmen/-farmers clashes was rejected by the people and withdrawn by the government due to fear and its security implications. Currently, there is a disconnect between that policy and the social reality of the citizens.

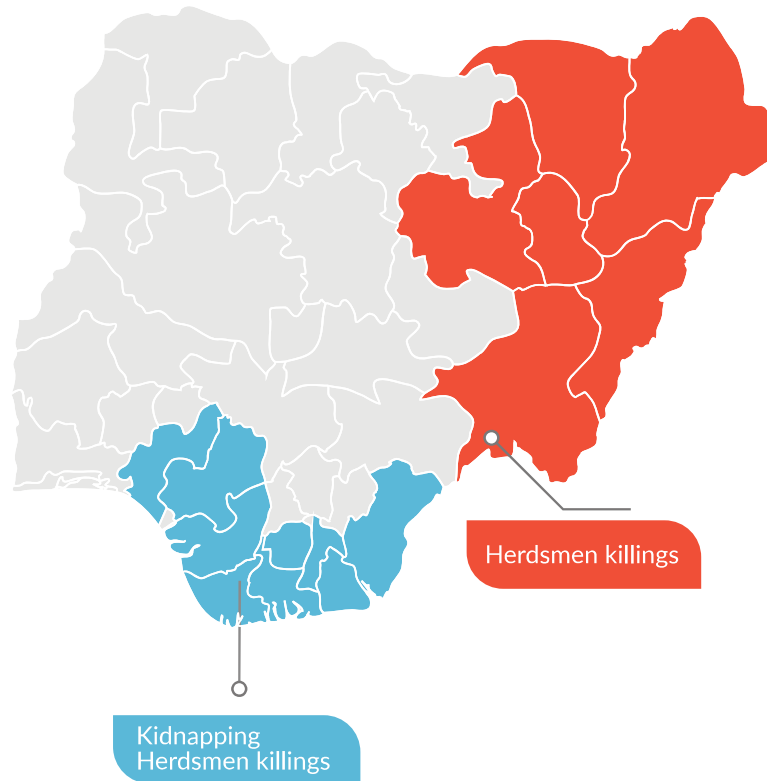
The state of insecurity may also not be unconnected with the reality of the Nigerian economy, with the country having the highest number of poor people in the world. The unemployment rate in the country is currently at 23.1 percent with the federal government saying it could reach 33.5 percent in 2020. There is a vicious circle of a failing economy, which leads people to seek alternative to make ends meet, leading to further violence that affects the economy of the country as investment will not thrive in an unstable environment.

¹ <https://punchng.com/herdsmen-killings-ai-blames-fg-for-3641-deaths/>

² <https://punchng.com/25794-killed-in-violent-crises-during-buharis-first-term-report/>

³ <https://www.pulse.ng/news/local/igp-says-1071-people-killed-685-kidnapped-in-nigeria-in-2019/681pntp>

NIGERIA



Between 2016 – 2018, Amnesty International stated that 3,641 persons were killed in clashes between herdsman and farmers . The organisation also claimed that 2,075 persons were killed in 2018 alone.



ISSUES ADDRESSED AND RESPONSES



FIRST PANEL SESSION

How do you fix a problem like chronic insecurity?

No nation can develop when the citizens do not feel safe. There is a need for a national dialogue on the state of insecurity in the country, especially at a time when it seems the government has come to the end of its wit in addressing the situation. The terrorism in the Northeast has not abated, the middle belt is plagued by farmers-herders' crisis and incessant attacks by bandits in the Northwest, especially Zamfara State.

The security situation has led to capital flight from the areas affected and has also reduced production of food and agricultural produce, which then leads to increased prices. We are also not forgetting the southern Kaduna killings which seems to have defied solution. Is there a better way of looking at the security challenge? What are we missing?

PANELISTS:

- **Dennis Amachree**, *Former Assistant Director, Department of State Security Service (DSS)*
- **Navy Commodore Omatseye Nesiana Rtd.**, *Executive Vice Chairman, Top-Private Security Services Ltd.*
- **Leonard Ebute**, *public affairs analyst and politician*
- **Ugochukwu 'Ruggedman' Stephens**, *musician, rapper, and UN Peace Ambassador*

MODERATOR:

Roqeebah Olaoniye, *Lead Associate, StateCraft Inc.*

RESPONSES:

Moderated by Roqeebah Olaoniye, the StateCraft's Lead Associate launched the conversation on the chronic insecurity faced by the country, while imploring participants to highlight actions and government decisions that led to the current issues. Commodore Omatseye began by conceptualizing security and chronic insecurity. He defined security as a state of freedom saying, "Security is a state of being protected". He explained that the government has been involved in providing different solutions to the problem, but has consistently failed. He stated that Nigerians are yet to accept that the insecurity facing the country is chronic, which, in turn, adds to the problem.

He would later classify unemployment as one of the reasons for the chronic insecurity, supporting his position with the suggestion that "if legitimate jobs are unavailable, people will automatically find an alternative means to fend for themselves". He concluded by saying that the real purpose of government is to ensure the well-being and welfare of its citizens.

Still discussing insecurity, Dennis Amachree explained that "Nigeria needs to go back to its roots to solve the problem". He then identified the country's ethnic diversity as a root cause of Nigeria's insecurity problem. "We are not a nation", he said. "We are a bunch of ethnic groups forced into a geographical zone." He also identified the need to have an indigenously created constitution, saying that "every country has a constitution, but our constitution till date has been written for us." He explained that since independence in 1960, foreigners have written our constitutions for us, irrespective of whether it seamlessly seeps into our cultural etiquettes or not.

He continued on the topic of foreign imposition, stating that "we are bedevilled by two major threats - ethnicity and religion. "Our religious beliefs were imposed on us," he said. This he opined as the reason for so much animosity amongst Nigerians. Leonard Ebute however refuted Mr. Amachree's claim. He disagreed with the idea that diversity was the reason for our insecurity, but alluded the issue to extreme poverty. He claimed that the poverty of many leads to the riches of a few. "When a status quo exists for too long, it becomes clear that some people are benefiting from it." Later on, he would state that "Boko haram has a supply line from which some people are benefiting".

He also explained that a few people have geographically positioned themselves where they can share the wealth of the entire nation amongst themselves saying, "A bunch of people are benefitting from resources in the centre where they exist." On the other hand, music artiste, Ruggedman was short and precise, as he identi-

fied greed and unaccountability as the two reasons for chronic insecurity. “How many people have been arrested for embezzling Nigeria’s funds?” he queried.

The session was concluded after the moderator raised the question of national border security, seeking to understand if this could also be traced to the current chronic insecurity. Dennis Amachree agreed, saying that “When you have porous borders, people are moving in and out and a lot of criminals are moving in and out too.” He claimed that because a lot of Nigerians cannot be identified with their national IDs, there is no way to know if the criminals are Nigerians. During the session, there was a heated engagement between Commodore Omatseye and former minister, Rotimi Amaechi on the fate of an unidentified whistle blower.





SECOND PANEL SESSION

Will the people's legislature please stand?

Elected representatives, especially those in the National Assembly, are seldom questioned about their policies and projects, or how they facilitated the delivery of public goods to their constituents.

In every democracy, the legislature is pivotal to the development of democratic institutions, values, and are critical to amplify the voice of citizens within the corridors of power. The legislature is critical to distilling values of good governance to every citizen, it is a custodian of the commonwealth and pivotal to National development.

However, there is a need for a discourse on the extent at which the National Assembly, since its inception in 1999, has contributed to the development of the country. How effective, responsive and responsible has it been in the face of critical national challenges?

PANELISTS:

- **Barrister Ismael Ahmed**, *SSA to the president on Social Investment.*
- **Ndi Kato**, *Deputy National Organizing Secretary, Middle-Belt Forum.*
- **Jude Ilo**, *Country Officer and Head of Nigeria Office of the Open Society Initiative for West Africa.*

RESPONSES:

The second session began with the moderator, Hero Daniels, welcoming the panelists as he described the theme of the panel session as, Representation! Will the people's representation, please stand up?

Jude Ilo built his answer on history, explaining the formation of the legislative arm of government in Nigeria, and spotted its young history as reason for its inadequacies.


“For more than a decade, there was no legislative arm of the government. In 1999, democracy came back to the country and we now had the first session of the national assembly. It was like we learnt on the job”, he said. He continued stating that “In 1999 till now, it’s been a long struggle of trying to create a legal framework that supports the masses, and to that extent, there have been trials and errors.” Asked about how effective the national assembly has been generally, Barrister Ismael Ahmed, just like Jude Ilo, talked about the assembly’s young lifespan.

On her part, Ndi Kato addressed female representation, as she expressed her dissatisfaction with the low representation of women in the parliament. She urged women to support other women in politics. “There are key policies that should be in place now, but we do not have the representation as far as women go. Women are not elected into this places, that is the issue,” she said. She argued that if there was enough female representation in legislative branch, Nigeria’s legislative problems would be solved.

The moderator moved on to prioritizing of bills, and how the legislatures do not prioritize bills which they ought to. Responding, Jude Ilo suggested that the country’s riches or poverty needs to be reflected in both the government and its citizens. “In a country where you have N18,000 as minimum wage, representatives of the people are giving themselves an allowance of 9million just to get in office, so you can see a clear disconnect,” he stated. “If the people you represent are suffering it needs to be clear that you are part of that suffering, whether it is in the adjustment of your bill or the adjustment in the way you pay yourself”. He also raised the question of the regularity of the citizens seeing and having a conversation with their representatives.

Citing her home town as an example, Ndi Kato laments that Nigeria is a poor country filled with poor people, despite the country’s booming resources. She claimed that poor people are uninterested in the policies, but are only interested in what to eat. “We are talking about our future; some people just need to feed. If you come to my hometown, they are even trying to sleep at night, literally, because of the terrorist killings. So, when someone cannot even think about tomorrow, not knowing if they will wake up and now you want to tell the person that this classroom you are building will... that’s not their conversation,” she said.

Barrister Ismael concluded that the government should focus on education, be it western or not. The rate of uneducated kids, he stated, is alarming. The conversation, which was both informative and stimulating, came to an end after the Q&A session.





THIRD PANEL SESSION

Aligning government policies to citizens realities

In sub-Saharan Africa, the governments fall short at creating enabling environments that would unleash the enterprise potentials of citizens to contribute to economic development, and their plans, even when prepared, does not transcend into a better reality for the citizens. How do we merge government plans to fit into the expectations of the people and how do they affect young and emerging leaders? How does key strategic government ministries regulate the economic space and how have their policies impacted the industry? Industries respond to the policies of regulating ministries, but most times, there is usually a disconnect between the regulating ministries and industries. In Nigeria, it is important for strategic ministries that directly interface with the citizens to provide the policy direction of this administration and how it will impact our realities.

PANELISTS:

- **Hon. Rotimi Amaechi**, *former minister of transportation, and former governor of Rivers State.*
- **Chinwe Egwim, Economist**, *FBNQuest Merchant Bank.*
- **Asuquo Ekpenyong**, *former commissioner of finance, Cross River State.*
- **Professor Remi Sonaiya**, *former Presidential Candidate.*

RESPONSES:

The third session was moderated by Sandra Ezekwesi, who introduced the panel's topic. She directed her first question to the former minister of transportation, Rotimi Amaechi, asking him why policies are so hard to implement and do not trans-

late to results.

Amaechi began by asking the audience: “How many of you have lead a bourgeoisie revolution?” The moderator asked what he meant by a “bourgeoisie revolution”, to which he responded with “a revolution led by capitalist.” No one responded in the affirmative.

He then declared himself as a former Nigerian Marxist, explaining that it meant a person who he criticizes the government from the outside, but while within, changes his views.

“Funds are not enough, Nigeria is not generating a lot of revenue, and the little revenue we have is in the hands of private individuals,” he stated.

He highlighted accountability as the country's biggest problem, stating that “Nigeria is a country without consequences”. During the conversation, he didn't, at any point, fail to reiterate that he loves the current administration, blaming the previous administration for the country's woes. He also expressed deeply his loyalty and admiration for the current President of Nigeria, President Muhammad Buhari.

When asked about her thoughts on some of Amaechi's points, Professor Sonaiya said, “he underscores for us the problem”. She called out his approach of self-praise. “We are supposed to be talking about policies and how to implement them. But there is too much about personal star. You are telling us you are able to achieve something. But that's more like personal star. How do we institutionalize thing, such that everybody delivers on what they are supposed to do?” she queried.

She also mentioned that successful countries are successful because everyone in public office can be held accountable for their actions. She concluded by discerning education as the key to transparency between the people and the government.

The next question was directed to Chinwe who was asked to describe how policies are created, why they seem not to be effective, and reasons for market and fiscal disruption when the government makes policies to make things cheap. Ms. Chinwe explained that ministries don't collaborate saying, “I can't speak authoritatively as a government agent, but what we are seeing as economists is that there is no synergy”.

The moderator moved to ask the former commissioner of finance, Cross River State, Asuquo Ekpenyong about the mechanisms to make government activities more open so that the people can monitor the problems themselves. He responded by explaining that we should exercise our rights to holding government accountable; that the myth of not being able to hold the government responsible is simply not true. He went further by citing the transparency in his previous commission,

describing the several stages a contracted work has to go through before commencement. “So I would say the most important thing has to do with transparency,” he concluded.

The moderator then turned to the former governor to ask about crime in his state. He stated that “policies must be clear on how to lift people from poverty”, and that if he were allowed to implement his ideas during his administration, he would have been able to give his state constant power supply, and by doing so, increase industrialization, fight poverty, which would reduce crime. He explained that the federal government at the time failed to give him the necessary support and resources needed to undertake his plan.

Professor Sonaiya was asked what outsiders can do to make the insiders in government fix the country. She stated, “Most of the people don’t even want to know what we are doing in the house of assembly, but many of them are more concerned about their personal issues. That is the challenge that I see for most of us that are out there. The common good has got to become our primary objective.”

When asked about the subsidy protest in 2012, and how to get Nigerians educated to the point where the government stops using policies against them, Ms. Chinwe responded with: “Sensitization. We need to look for how we can speak to people in their own dialect”.

Mr. Ekpenyong was asked if the Nigerian civil service has the resources to implement 21st century policies. He responded by stating that, “It’s all about training and how you train your staff. When you engage people it is important to train them”.

When asked what the current administration has done better than the previous, Amaechi replied by claiming that the current administration is more diverse and less gender-biased. He appeared to trail off a little, narrating a personal experience about how when women are afforded huge budget contracts, there is usually an infidelity accusation that follows. Therefore, he stopped awarding women contracts, especially to avoid having a bad and false reputation among his citizens.

He mentioned how the current administration, under the guidance of President Buhari whom he admires, has grown agriculture by reducing the importation of meat, fish and other agricultural produce. He praised Buhari for getting rid of the monopoly of GPS (Grand Parent Stock) in the country thereby making poultry farming a free for all trade.

According to him, “The growth of the economy is greatly dependent on how much infrastructure we have. Are you not ashamed that you are running to South Africa, and when you get to J-Burg (Johannesburg), it’s like you are in another world?” To end the session, there was a series of questions from the audience which were answered by the panellists.



CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Nigerians need to be more consistent in holding public officials accountable for their actions. We need absolute transparency from the government. For this, literacy and information are key. They need to be able to decipher, as best as possible, the truth about what they are told by government officials. And if false they need a clear understanding of their rights to demand greater openness. The people need to understand that, as opposed to the deity-like personalities politicians portray themselves as, these leaders are nothing but civil servants. Their primary job is to serve the people and not to oppress them. If this mentality is imbibed in the minds of the masses, then fear would be eliminated and people would be able to hold public office holders accountable. And citizens need to be able to differentiate truth from propaganda.

Active citizenship still remains the solution to Nigeria's extant problems. No government would seat back and watch when she knows her people cannot be taken for granted.

NEXT STEPS AND IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK

The former minister of transportation promised to ask the President to press for the release of anyone who has been jailed for giving information on any corruption cases under the whistle-blower policy.