

State Creation and Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria: Re-Flections on Edo State

Aiguosatile Otoghile Ph.D. Eghweree, Oghneruonah Charles

Lecturers, Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria
reonas@uniben.edu

Abstract

The issue of state creation has been championed over the years as to create the impression that it constitutes the single answer to the myriad of problems that exist in the country. Many have argued that the creation of more states would curb domination, increase socio-economic activities and cure the nation of numerous ills. The government (especially the military) seemed to have bought these arguments and have therefore embarked on state creation to the extent that today the former three regions have been transformed into thirty-six states. This paper is an attempt to critically examine the validity of these claims using Edo State as a case study. The paper concludes that Edo State has not been able to drastically reduce poverty, create jobs and greatly improve on infrastructural facilities because of inadequate finance engendered partly by the general economic crisis in the country and the increase in the number of states.

Keywords: State creation, social services, economic development, social engagement,

INTRODUCTION

State creation and the politics of it have a long history in Nigeria. The present Nigerian nation did not exist until the coming of the British in the 19th century. The British conquest of the various indigenous groups began the process of political integration. In 1914, the British amalgamated the northern and southern protectorates as one country (Colman, 1958:41).

From 1922 to 1960, modern Nigeria passed through series of constitutional and political developments that eventually made her a federation. Within this period, the quest for separate status within the federation also started. In fact, the earliest beginning of the issue of state creation can be traced to 1943 when Nnamdi Azikiwe recommended the division of the country into eight units. Four years later, Obafemi Awolowo recommended ten. The years between 1947 and 1960 witnessed intense agitations of minorities for their own state. In 1951, a movement was established under the leadership of the Oba of Benin, Akenzua II for the creation of Midwest State comprising Benin and Delta provinces. As the agitation was going on, the people of the Middle Belt area also began a call for the creation of the middle-Belt region under the championship of a party called the Middle Belt People's Party. The minorities in the East were not also left out in the struggle for state creation. The Calabar, Ogoja and Rivers provinces also called for the creation of Calabar, Ogoja, Rivers State (COR) out of the Eastern Region (Ojiako, 1981:41). This quest for states by the various minority groups resulted from the fear of domination and the need for accelerated economic development. This paper interrogates the issue of state creation and socio-economic development using Edo State as a case study. It is divided into the follow subheadings:

- State and Development: A Conceptual Overview
- State and Development: A Theoretical Statement
- Agitations for Edo State
- State creation and Socio-Economic Development: An Analysis of Edo State
- Conclusion

STATE AND DEVELOPMENT: A CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW STATE

The five letter word "state" has been widely used in recent times. Not only has the term become popular, it has also gained a variety of meanings. Willoughby defined the state as a body of people living in a defined territory organized in such a way that a designated few of their own number can expect to control, directly or indirectly by means of appeal to real or imputed group values or by force if necessary, a more or less restricted range of activities of the body of the people (Willoughby, 1922:3).

The state as defined by Finer "is the association that is supreme over other associations and individuals; the supreme social framework" (Quoted in Iwuasi, 1985:3). H.J. Laski conceived of the state as a territorial society divided into governments and subjects claiming within its allotted physical area, a supremacy over all other institutions (Laski, 1935:62).

The Marxian notion of the state has contributed greatly to the literature on the state. According to Ralph Miliband, the state refers to the institutions – the government, the administration, the military and the

police, the judicial branch, sub-central government and parliamentary assemblies which make up the state and whose interrelationship shapes the form of the state system. It is these institutions in which state power lies and it is through them that this power is wielded in its different manifestation by the people who occupy the leading positions in each of these institutions (Miliband, 1969:54). However, we must distinguish between the broad notion of the state in the above definitions from the state in this research undertaking. The state here is used to refer to sub-units within a country or a larger state system. It is a specific geographical area within a country with its people and government.

DEVELOPMENT

The term “development” over the years has been conceived as a process of economic and social change with the aim of achieving better life. Only a few analysts have stopped to ask themselves if these changes could be for the worse for some sectors of the society and better for others. It is very useful to retain the positive value placed on the term development as first of all the escape of man out of conditions of exploitation, poverty and oppression (Cockroft, 1970:272) and that development involves changes in the basic institution and structures of society.

Walter Rodney sees development in human society as many sided process. To him, at the level of the individual, it implies increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being. He further argued that some of these indicators are completely moral categories and are very complicated to evaluate. At the level of social groups, it implies an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships (Rodney, 1972:9).

Schumpeter in his own contribution to the theory of economic development, published in Germany in 1911, which was later elaborated in his *Business Cycle*, published in 1939 defined development “as only such changes in economic life as are not forced upon it from without but arise by its own initiative from within” (Quoted in Onyemeluke, 1974:2). Schumpeter disagreed with the mere use of economic indicators as recorded growth of output and income to indicate economic growth. The economic growth indicated by such factors or indicators, to him are mere changes in data.

For M.P. Todaro, development is a multi-dimensional process involving the re-organization and re-orientation of entire economic and social system. In addition to improvement in income and output, it typically involves radical changes in institutional, social and administrative structures as well as in particular attitude and in many cases even customs and beliefs (Todaro, 1981:56).

In Dudley Seer’s view, the questions to ask about a country’s development are: What has been happening to unemployment? What have been happening to poverty? What has been happening to inequality? If all these have declined from high levels, then no doubt, this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result development; even if per-capital income doubled (Seers, 1972:124).

No matter what may be said about development, it has become clear that the concept of development has undergone profound changes over the years. The very meaning of development has been altered from an almost elusive pre-occupation with aggregate economic growth to a much broader interpretation that encompasses the question of poverty, inequality and unemployment. It is this conception that this work proceeds on, i.e. socio-economic development. Thus, in socio-economic development, our fundamental conception shall be what has been happening to poverty, inequality, standard of living, education, roads, electricity, health services, unemployment and other variables that have direct impact on the people.

STATE CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT: A THEORETICAL STATEMENT

The social science perhaps much more than any other field of study is flooded with theories. These theories help to explain the dynamic character of reality. In this section, we shall attempt to examine theories relating to the two major concepts, namely the state and development. For both concepts, we shall examine both the non-Marxist and Marxist theories.

The non-Marxist theory of the state represents a shorthand expression for a variety of opinion of which the liberal or social contract theories stand out as the most formidable. The social contract theory regards the state as the product of the conscious effort of those within it to form a union. Many different versions of the social contract theory were advanced during the period of the religious wars and the course of the popular revolutions in England, America and France. Two of the best known and most influential social contract theorists were Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. It is interesting to note that the former outlined a social contract by which man surrendered all his natural rights to an absolute monarch, while the latter described an agreement by which man retained almost all his natural rights under a limited parliamentary type of government responsible to the people (Appadorai, 1968:30). All social contract theories assume a primordial “state of nature” in which men had lived together without the state or government; they processed natural rights derived from the law of nature – a law which man was able to perceive by the exercise of their reason (Rodee, et al, 1967:26).

Hobbes (1588-1679) argues that in the state of nature there was no morality, nothing is unjust, no common power, no law, no rights, no wrongs. But there was passion that also inclined man to peace in the state of war. They are passions not alien to the state of nature itself. There are the fear of death, desire to live better and security, etc. Put similarly, it is the struggle for survival. Hence Hobbes argued that man was so anxious to achieve safety, peace and so voluntarily surrendered all his natural rights to the sovereign in exchange for security (Rodee, et al. 1967:26).

Hobbes has been criticized on several grounds. His theory of social contract is historical because primitive society rested on status not contract; his view of human nature as essentially selfish cannot be maintained; his contention that man surrendered almost all his natural rights is an insult on commonsense (Appadorai, 1968:23).

For Locke, the state of nature was a state of perfect freedom and equality. People were their own judge and master, each seeking his good individually. Though it was a state of liberty, man had no liberty to destroy himself or so much as any creature in his possession (Locke, 1980:9).

Locke conceived the state as created through the medium of a contract in which individuals agree with every other individual to give to the community the natural right of enforcing the law of reason in order that life, liberty and property may be preserved (Appadorai, 1968:25). Locke has been criticized in that following his analysis there is no person that is sovereign. The community is supreme but the supreme power is latent. Its power does not come to play so long as the government is acting according to the trust reposed on it; but when it acts contrary to that trust, the power of the community manifest itself in its rights to replace that government by another (Appadorai, 1968:26).

In conclusion, one central notion that can be implied from the submission of Locke and Hobbes is in their conception of the state as a neutral force presiding over the affairs of men justly. For them the state is supposed to represent the interests of all in the society.

The Marxist notion of the state can be regarded as a fundamental reaction to earlier scholars' contention that the state is a neutral force. Questioning the basis of equality, Karl Marx propounded a class approach to the state. For Marx, the state did not evolve out of a so-called voluntary social contract but out of class contradictions and the need for one class to dominate the other.

In the Marxian notion, the state arose within the division of society into antagonistic classes, but it does not reconcile the contradiction and antagonism between them (Ekekwe, 1986:10). Marx showed that the historical development of the state had little to do with representative institutions; on the contrary, the state was something through which the will of the ruling class was imposed on the rest of the people. In the primitive society, there was no state, but when human society became divided into classes, the conflict of interest between the classes made it impossible for the privileged class to maintain its privileges without an armed force directly controlled by it and protecting its interest (Burns, 1977:58). The state thus is not an organization of the whole society but a special organization within society armed with power to repress and coerce (Comforth, 1954:70).

For development, we can also draw a dichotomy between non-Marxist and Marxist conceptions. The non-Marxist conception/theory which is basically also referred to as the orthodox approach could be traced to two different strands of intellectual movements in Europe – the progressivism of the eighteenth century and the evolutionism of the nineteenth century (Hoogvelt, 1970). This approach also called modernization school emerged as a result of the Cold War politics and the politics of decolonization.

The common features of these orthodox development theories is the assumption that underdevelopment is an original condition which is characterized by indices such as traditionism and that development consists of abandoning these characteristics and adopting those of the Western developed countries.

These scholars however approach the problem of development in different ways. Some identify the basic problems of modernization as that of the development of system capabilities, some approach the issue from the perspective of development of mutual trust and cooperative attitude and yet others view development from the perspective of creating complex bureaucratic and political institutions requiring a high level of organization. While others like (Rostow, 1960:22) see the problem of development in terms of economic categories, such as capital formation, labour market mechanism, urban industrial growth measured in term of gross national product or income per-capital, however, common to these scholars is the shared belief that the common denominator to which all aspects of development could be reduced is the attainment of an industrialized, rationally and politically democratic society patterned after the characteristics of the Western democracy.

The other school of thought which is the underdevelopment theory emerged as a reaction to the orthodox theories. This school views the Third World countries as being beset by a variety of institutional and structural economic rigidities and caught up in a dependent and dominant relationship to the rich countries. The school also attributes underdevelopment primarily to the historical evolution of a highly unequal international capitalist system of rich countries – poor country relationship (Bodenheimer, 1971:90).

This school in general rejects the exclusive emphasis on accelerating the growth of GNP as bourgeois economist will want us to believe, as an index of development. Instead, they contend that emphasis should be

placed on structural and institutional reforms other than domestic and international in order to eradicate absolute poverty, less income inequalities and improve the general living standard of the masses.

As divergent as the above schools of thoughts may look, Hoogvelt has intelligently attempted to find a balance between them. As Hoogvelt has summarized, the balance is provided by viewing on the one hand objectively underdevelopment as the result of interaction with development and on the other subjectively underdevelopment as the awareness and experience which result from the interaction with developed societies. Hence the wish to develop, i.e. to catch up is born (Hoogvelt, 1970:150). This line of thought brought Hoogvelt to the conclusion that development ought to be treated as an “action”. In other words, development is tantamount to planning and deliberate engineering of the process of eternal societal dynamics of growth and change (Hoogvelt, 1970:150).

Having discussed theories on state and development separately, we shall now briefly relate the state to the issue of socio-economic development beginning with the Marxist notion.

For the Marxist, there is no way that fragmentation of a notion into states can guarantee socio-economic development. This is because of their fundamental notion of the class character of societies and it is this principle that would guide this work. For Marx policies and programmes (including state creation) are only reflections of the conflict between contending classes. It is also in line with such contention to claim that state creation would thus be a means of not only perpetuating the domination of one class by another, but also for the sole benefits of that class. This Marxist notion that best captures the Nigeria situation was aptly described by Nnoli when he wrote that “certainly” it is not the former or low or middle income workers but the bureaucrats who become permanent secretaries overnight, the university don who achieves professional status (irrespective of merit because of new universities located in the area), lawyers and doctors who become commissioners, chairmen of public cooperatives, various institutes and broadcasting services and the contractor and businessmen who monopolizes official contract in their states of origin that benefit. The rest, the poor worker and peasants are told that the exercise would bring development but they wait in vain (Nnoli, 1978:268). This view will guide this work.

AGITATIONS FOR EDO STATE

The agitation for Edo State did not become a prominent issue until the Second Republic when state agitation assumed a monumental scale when about forty states were agitated for. The chief instrument for the agitation for the state was the Edo State movement whose grand patron and leader was the Omo N’Oba N’Edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Erediawa of Benin. It is important to point out however that before the Second Republic, three proposed states of Delta, Warri and Niger had been on the agitation list from the Urhobos, Itsekiris and Igbos respectively from the Midwestern State. At the inception of the Second Republic, these demands were not only resurrected but also became more intense as the government of the federation was yet to meet them. The Edo speaking people who had hitherto kept sealed lips on the issue of state creation at that time began to organize themselves in preparation to join the quest for separate states. The Edo State Movement was thus formed to spearhead the demand for a separate state for Edo speaking people of Bendel State, as other ethnic groups in Bendel State were doing.

The question to ask in the light of the above discussion is why did Edo speaking people wait for a long time in joining the group that demanded for separate states considering the fact that other parts of the then Bendel State had called for their separate states?

To begin, we must realize that the Edo speaking people hold their Oba in high esteem. He was regarded as the reservoir of knowledge and the custodian of the people’s wishes and aspirations. Many did not dare challenge his views on pertinent issues. In the words of the Oba of Benin concerning the self-determination sought by the Edo speaking people in Bendel state, he said, “personally, my stand had been that the present Bendel State ought not to be broken up one would want to see the state keep intact” (Edo State Movement and its constitution:5). Given that his interest was not to see Bendel State balkanized, Edo speaking indigenes who may or may not have wanted an Edo State could not risk a voyage of state agitation without the blessings of the Oba who was held in high esteem.

The reason for the monarch’s stance is not farfetched. It is on record that the ancient Benin Empire at its peak period covered a wide expanse of area to include parts of Lagos, Badagry and parts of present day Benin Republic. Much of the then Delta Province was at one time or the other under this great empire. Many areas under the present day Delta State like the Urhobos and the Igbos claim to originate from Benin. Before the advent of colonialism, they not only acknowledge Benin as their original abode but further displayed their loyalty to the Oba of Benin through tribute payment. With the advent of colonialism and the eventual subjugation of Benin massacre, the relationship between Benin and these areas changed drastically. Colonialism altered the political control that Benin hitherto had over these areas. Despite this monumental change, the Oba of Benin was still regarded at least nominally as the royal father of these areas.

However, at the inception of the Second Republic, the Oba had no alternative but to change his

position. That Republic saw the clamour by the Urhobos, Itsekiris, Ijaws and Igbos for Delta, Coast and Anioma states respectively. Initially, in the quest for new states, the Edo speaking people did not aggressively pursue the creation of an Edo State because if demands for Delta and Anioma states were granted, they would logically be left with a state of their own. However, as events began to unfold themselves, their position and attitude toward state creation changed drastically.

State creation exercise seemed to have been destined never to take place under a politically democratic framework considering the intense party politics and intrigues that made it extremely difficult for a consensus on which states to be reached. The overthrow of the Shagari's administration by the military on December 31, 1983 shattered the dreams of state agitators and the Edo State Movement went into sleep.

The military however rekindled the hope of enthusiastic state agitators with the setting up of the Political Bureau to look into ways of ensuring a viable future and politically stable nation. One of the political issues which the Political Bureau included on its agenda was the issue of state creation. Champions of separate states resumed duty and began to clamour for new states.

The political Bureau recommended the creation of Delta and Anioma States and that the leftover territory be named Benin City. This recommendation did not see the light of day as the government only created two states: Kastina and Akwa-Ibom on September 23, 1987.

The state creation exercise of 1987 left many people and ethnic groups that have championed the creation of separate states dissatisfied especially with the pronouncement of the then President Ibrahim Babangida in his broadcast announcing the creation of the two states in which he said: "this administration wishes to emphasize that no further comments or petitions (no state creation) will be tolerated during the period of this transition" (Tell Magazine, 1991:11). The above however was not to be as pressure was mounted on the President from all directions for new states. In fact, the Political Bureau had earlier warned that

"If the issue of creating additional states is left unresolved and therefore carried over to the new political era, it will be used by politicians to whip up emotional support and divert attention from concrete issues of development. The present administration should tackle the issue decisively and realistically so it could put out the agenda from Nigerian politics". (Political Bureau, 1987:178).

Thus, the government decided to revisit the issue in 1991. On 27th August, 1991, during the second state creation exercise of the Ibrahim Babangida's regime, Delta State was carved out of Bendel State and what was remaining was re-christened Edo State.

STATE CREATION AND SOCIAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF EDO STATE

To many, the state has the capacity of transforming the socio-economic conditions of whenever it is created. They argue that it has the capacity of bringing about more meaningful development. It is in the light of these arguments that this section takes a critical look at available evidence in the area of health services, industrial sector, water supply, etc. to see if these contentions are true or untrue.

HEALTH SERVICES

The importance of the health sector in any society cannot be over-emphasized. For a people to make meaningful contributions to the development of a society, they must be first and foremost, healthy. It is in recognition of this that government all over the world places emphasis on the improvement of the health sector. However, in most cases, this emphasis has not been accompanied with the needed resources and political commitment on the part of the leaders we can thus evaluate the effectiveness of the health sector by the adequacy or inadequacy of health facilities.

In 1963 (when Bendel State was created), there were nine general hospitals with a bed capacity of 609 in the state. By September 1974, there were 24 general hospitals with 1,949 beds. Urban health centers numbered 11 and there were 163 maternity homes and 137 dispensaries. The number of dressing stations was 42 and the state government employed 78 doctors. In March 1978, the number of operative general hospitals was 39, 32 in 1987 and the facility available in Bendel state increased tremendously to 44 hospitals, 55 health centers/clinics, 202 maternities and 248 dispensaries owned and managed by the government (Inienger, 1981:5-6).

By 1992 when Bendel State was split into two, Edo State was left with one teaching hospital, 24 government hospitals, 34 private hospitals and 48 private clinics. When compared to a population of about 2,159,848 the inadequacy of the health facilities in the state becomes glaring. This means that the state had only one centre for the health needs of about 89,994 citizens. Thus, in most of the rural areas in Edo State, the citizens are constantly harassed by ailments such as malaria, cholera and other water borne diseases. Much against the optimism of the agitators for more states, the state has been able to do little or nothing to ameliorate these problems. In fact, the first executive civilian governor of the state, John Odigie Oyegun complained openly most times that the state has no money to engage in viable projects after the payment of salaries. Till

date, the complains are still here. This type of predicament faced by Edo State obviously applies to most other states of the federation.

INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

Industrialization is generally acclaimed as a vital factor in the development of any country. This is because through industrialization, a society can guarantee the individuals' consumption of vital goods and at the same time provides employment for large proportion of the population. However, the process of industrialization is not an easy one. Typically, industries require large investments to the tune of hundreds of millions that few states can hardly provide within the Nigerian federal system. With further division into 36 states, there is no doubt that the process of industrialization would be adversely affected as only a few states can muster enough revenue to take care of its recurrent expenditure not to talk of contemplating capital industrial projects.

Taking a closer look at the states and industrialization, we would discover that even when Midwest State was carved out of the Western Region in 1963, the state (Midwest later renamed Bendel) was already in a state of backwardness. One of the most prominent figures in the region at the time and incidentally its first Prime Minister lucidly grasped it when he declared

"We are called upon to set up a government where there is no government and to establish a civil service and other organs of modern administration where there are none. There are no public buildings for the headquarters of the new administration and no quarters for the staff. We are rotating over from anyone on the spot. In short, we are sent to a thick forest with instructions to produce a plantation"
(Newswatch Magazine, 1988:15).

However, as years rolled by and new pages were written in the annals of history, the new state began to make giant strides. Barely within 20 years of its existence, a good number of industries were established in the state which include the Refinery and Steel complex at Aladja, both belonging to the federal government, the Bendel Breweries and the Bendel Pharmaceuticals, both owned by the state government and many other scale industries owned by individuals (Newswatch Magazine, 1988:25).

With the division of the former Bendel state into two states namely Edo and Delta, there is no doubt that the state would never be the same again industrially. Some of the major viable industries like the Refinery, the Steel Complex are now in her sister state, Delta. Furthermore, the financial problem that the nascent state has faced since its inception has made it virtually impossible for the state to think of any giant industrial project. Furthermore, the general economic problems in the country have also affected the capability of the state to carry out meaningful industrial projects. Thus, the state has privatized a few companies or industries that it inherited from the former Bendel State e.g. Bendel Brewery, Bendel Pharmaceuticals, etc. Certainly, the state would require the finest combination of effective political leaders and the cooperation of all within it to industrialize it. Without industries, employment cannot be guaranteed for its citizens.

INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES

The importance of infrastructural facilities like water and electricity cannot be over-emphasized in any society. Good water for example is a major pre-requisite to good health. The above is because many diseases could be transmitted through water. However, despite the division of the former Bendel State into two, the problem of water in Edo State still remain a prominent one. In rural areas/communities, in the state, it is a question of total absence of pipe borne water. The people have of necessity to trek miles to get water from a stream or a river. Such a source is usually used by many people ranging in some cases from ten to a few hundred while in some villages it could run to a few thousands. Furthermore, the source of water supply to such rural communities is usually used for multifarious purposes. People could be seen most often than not washing their dirty clothes by the sides of the same stream or river they intend to get their cooking or drinking water from. Yet, a few others would not care as they may even pass waste products from the human body into the water or stream. This situation has led to the outbreak and rapid spread of diseases in our villages in Edo State.

The government of Edo State though has shown concern for this ugly trend but has been unable to do much because of the much talked about precarious financial position of the state. It was this financial position that the first civilian executive Governor of the State, Chief John Odigie Oyegun complained of in almost all his public addresses before he was shown the way out by the military boys. However, a very few attempts to sink boreholes in some parts of these rural areas did not yield good results for some obvious reasons. The most important of such reasons is that most of such areas do not have constant and steady source of power supply. In some cases, they had to rely on generator to operate these boreholes and again, such generators could only serve for a limited time before they are switched off.

Apart from the rural areas, there is also the problem of getting pipe borne water in the urban areas; most parts of the urban areas do not have water as one can see in most parts of the cities people carrying basins and cans of water from one part to the other. Even before the creation of the states, the federal government

seems to have stepped into this issue by offering financial assistance towards the completion of Ikpoba River Dam that would serve Benin City and its environs. However, today despite the completion and commissioning of a part of that project, the city is still in serious lack of pipe borne water. The result is that most people have no alternative but to resort to buying water from tanks they know little or nothing about their sources of water.

It is usually erroneously contended by some that the creation of more states would enhance the living standard of the people in that state. This contention is oblivious of the structural determinants under which states are created and the macro-economic policies of each government that almost renders ineffective state policies and programmes.

Under the IBB's administration, the adoption of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) led to immense poverty for the people. According to Abdul Raufu Mustapha,

"SAP has its fundamental consequences for Nigerian society, politics and economy. Nowhere are these consequences as profound as in the drastic fall in the living standards of those sections of the population dependent on fixed salaries. Equally affected are some sections of the rural population and urban artisanal groups. This erosion of living standard has spurred many households to seek additional income by engaging in multiple jobs". (Mustapha, 1992:106).

State creation has no way of increasing the living standards of the people in the midst of such harsh economic policies.

CONCLUSION

This paper has so far been dealing with the issue of state creation and its impact on socio-economic development with special attention to Edo State. It took a look first and foremost at the historical evolution of Edo State. Secondly, it took a look at the agitation for its creation. Finally, the paper examines the relationship between state creation and social-economic development in various segments of the society and concludes that Edo state has not been able to perform its obligations in this direction because of inadequate finance engendered partly by the large number of states in the country and partly by the general economic crisis in the country.

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