

Exploring Nigeria's Public Projects Prospects for the Good of Nigerians

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Abstract

Public projects that should facilitate wellbeing of Nigerians have suffered setbacks and not been able to do so. This study is a descriptive type and discussed the forces of projects failure, intrigues of public officers that subvert project outcomes, the expected roles of state actors in project pursuits, and prospects for public projects in Nigeria. The study found that paucity of funds, policy summersault, and inflation of projects costs, poor delivery of projects or outright abandonment by contractors, attitudes of the ruling regime, its successor and beneficiaries are some of the forces that obstruct public projects. The study also found that corruption, use of direct labor, connivance; party politics, poor focus and maintenance, personalization of public project, misplaced priority are some of the intrigues of project initiators that subvert project outcomes in Nigeria. The study also found that numerous skilled bureaucrats, due process, procurement system, and supremacy of the constitution, multi-party politics, and the presidential system of government with democratic system that Nigeria practices are some of the opportunities open to the country on its public projects fortune. This study made use of secondary data that was sourced from journal articles, online materials, government gazettes, policy documents, and other publications. The data was content analyzed thematically. The study concluded that members of the public need to make attainable gains from numerous public project opportunities.

Keywords: project initiator, opportunities, public projects, masses, wellbeing of Nigerians

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Introduction

The word prospect has a range of meanings. It is an idea of what might happen in the future. It is an act of looking forward, having a mental picture of something to come, or expectation that is likely to be beneficial. According to Ayo (1985), prospects refer to the numerous opportunities or advantages Nigeria has that are capable of effectively and efficiently bring about a breakthrough in her public projects attainments. For the purpose of this discourse, prospect is the potential for the formulation and implementation of public projects. For any public project to be appreciated, it must impact on the lives of the masses. According to Terry (2022), members of the public should be the target for putting public projects in place. Some of the projects are directed to improve specific sector such as education, ministries, agencies or commission, transportation, health, the economy, defense, power, agriculture and so on (Zeglod, 2021). Also, as part of government policy drive, school buildings, transformers, electric poles, solar lights, security apparatus, roads, hospitals, police stations, cars/buses, furniture, working tools, erosion control, and emergency needs could be put in place to make life better for the citizenry (Zatman, 2017).

At different times, some public projects are either made by the federal, state or local government. The projects could also be in the area of the economy, agriculture, education, health, infrastructure provisions, and security. Public projects should be annually budgeted for because they should make life better for the citizenry of the country (Goulet, 2021). Public projects are not expected to be haphazardly done. They should be adequately planned for (Gunther, 2021). Party manifestoes are expected to translate into public projects. The public projects should also serve as a parameter with which a particular regime is assessed. The projects should make life better for the citizenry of the country (Goulet, 2021). Thus, members of the public could either praise a particular regime or criticize it based on what it puts in place to improve the life of the citizenry (Yusuf, et al. (2017 and Wole (2018). Therefore, state actors must note that all public projects should provide cursor to the electorate that state actors are representing.

Unfortunately, most public projects that were put in place with good intention to make life better for Nigerians have not sufficiently achieved the desired outcomes (public good). Many projects do not last long, some are outrightly abandoned, and others are not delivered based on the quality quoted (Ajibola, 2019). According to Zeglod (2021), other public projects are combinations of being excellent, good, fair and poor when delivered. Several projects are partly good and bad. In the end, such projects do not meet peoples' needs. It is either the contractor is not competent or deliberately manipulates the execution of the project for personal gain or compromised standard because of kickbacks paid to contract-awardee. Such poor project delivery are

pronounced in roads construction, building of school classrooms, supply of serviceable items like cars, machines and office equipment, consumables, such as biro, and refill inks for photocopier, and tires for government vehicles and so on (Akinola, 2021). There are instances whereby road construction starts with a quoted specification but becomes bad mid-way and end well; books productions are mixed with good and bad qualities. School buildings are also admixture of good and bad work. In summary, many government projects are not delivered with quality materials, and thereby crippled state development (Abilor, 2018). Therefore, the public is the victim, that are cheated when public projects are poor delivered.

Contending Forces on Project Failure

Several forces are working against prompt, accurate and appropriate delivery of public projects. Any time the forces are at play, they hinder public projects from being enjoyed by members of the public. Some of these forces emanate from state actors or initiators of the projects. Other forces are from outside, that is, members of the public or beneficiaries of the projects. The contending forces are either deliberately made to distort the project output or created by circumstances not factored into the project processes. In order to have good projects that would that would ensure there is value for the money earmarked, it is apposite that we interrogate these forces, discuss their impacts, and the destruction they wreck on public projects delivery. Stakeholders in public projects, either as awardees, contractors and beneficiaries should not handle the forces with levity. According to Sull (2019), the forces have been part and parcel of public project execution over the years but are not handled with the required attention they deserve.

Irrespective of the type of project, project initiators need to consider availability of required funds. On several occasions, funds required for a specific project are not properly budgeted. Thus, unavailability of funds makes the quality of projects to be compromised. Many times, projects awardees know that this is important, but sometimes prefer the project be done with a lower sum and with the same quality. The president, governor, minister, commissioner or whoever the executor is might not have the ulterior intention to divert the funds meant for the project but might under-budget. He/she might not even request for any return from the contractor but intentionally negotiates for a lower sum that is unlikely to complete a desirable quality project. The executor, therefore, pleads for lesser project sum for want of funds. On the long run, what he/she gets in return because of the low pay would certainly be a low-quality project. The idea of conserving more funds at the expense of awarded projects results in sub-standard and inferior public projects.

There is also “just do something” force. Many project awardees do not care to have their names written in gold. They are simply not interested in any legacy. Instead, they just wish they do something and make money from the process. These are called “per centers” (Gunther, 2022). Such desperate project-hungers look for all means to embark on projects, but are not after the success of the project. The project to them, are just means to making money (Haide, 2021). As the projects are being awarded, they demand for a percentage of return from the contractor, which is sometimes not negotiable. Such percentage of return is also expected to be paid up-front. In their words, they cheerfully say “we are the one giving you contract, we are also the one to certify it, so this is the sum I want” (Milky, 2019). When the contractor has paid such percentage, he/she would be left with no option than to just do “something”. And doing ‘something’ can never be in the interest of Nigerians. It would mean to compromise the standard.

Similarly to the above force, there is the desperation for getting a project executed at all cost by ones firm without appreciable profit margin. In contractual business, the motive is to gain (making profit). The same motive also goes to contractors. There are instances when contractors are aware that they will not deliver a good project because their profit margin is low and would be seriously affected. He/she will not hesitate to accept such projects, but instead of not making a good profit would just do “something”. Thus, mid-way into the execution of such project, the contractor would begin to complain. At times, some even accepts a project for execution, knowing fully well that he/she would not do it well but just to make little gains only to make ends meet. It is also a common parlance in wrong project execution to hear “this I have stamped, you may not consider me for another one, and I do not care” (Suberu, 2022). Even when such contractors are never considered in the future for any further project, the bad one is already a loss and waste of fund. The masses still suffer the loss on the long run.

It is also not strange to see project initiator deliberately awarding projects to incompetent or in-experienced contractors. This could be due to ‘party consideration’. It is true projects are advertised and billed for. The project-awardees might not ask for any percentage return, but deliberately not pick the best contractor because he is not favored by the political party in power. The state actors then deploy all means to ensure his preferred (anointed contractor) wins the contract. Due to party affiliation, quality jobs are frequently compromised and nothing will happen. The party in power uses every tactics to protect the dis-satisfied project. On the long run, there would not be value for the money spent on the project. The public, therefore, grab with whatever it is handed over to government.

There is also the sub-letting or outright sale of project to another contractor for execution. According to

Johnson (2016), many old and ill-fated contractors that events have overtaken are fond of this practice. Most contractors in this category are well known, but are either no longer in vogue or old on the job. Because of their past integrity on the job, they easily get new contracts but do not have the wherewithal to implement them. Some of them do not have the required strength to monitor the project, money to implement it or current implement to get it properly done. They either sell it to another contractor or collaborate with a partner. When they sell the contract out rightly, it is often on the high side. The sharing formula that some of them requested could be so high to the extent that the project would delay until a buyer is sought. Some aged contractors in this category even save the mobilization funds, only to come up later and complain that the funds is not enough for the project, when in reality, they have not started anything or have started shabbily. In the end, they mess up the project, and discourage the project initiator.

In another vein, there are cases of the use of fake materials for projects. Some contractors deliberately use only fake materials, and others mix fake material with original ones. There is also the rush to cover up the fake and sub-standard items with the connivance of those in power (Goulet, 2021). When fake items are used for projects, they can never give appropriate yield to public expectation. In some cases, the use of fake materials might not be deliberate. At times, contractors find it difficult to get original raw materials (Johnson, 2016). However, instead of being patient, such contractors use what they could quickly get, because of unstable market price. Truly, rapid inflation might make the approved sum for the contract to be insufficient. Thus, a contractor quickly opts for fake material, at the expenses of members of the public, who are beneficiaries.

Some projects are also hurriedly implemented without following appropriate procedures. This affects structural engineering works, when procedures or time required for a particular stage of the construction before the next stage is ignored. For example, bridges or coverts that require three months to be firm might be opened without meeting up the time requirement. It is also rampant to see contractors tarring roads at mid-night or during a heavy rainfall in order to meet up a deadline. Many road constructions are carried out during raining season, which is not appropriate (Sull, 2019). Residents of a place might not be able to bear pain when roads are being constructed, especially if there are no alternative routes. Sometimes, the rush might be to meet up with handing over date of a newly elected official or outgoing one, a response to residents' pains. School building could be worked upon when heavy rain is falling. There have been instances of plastering and painting of public structures (buildings) almost simultaneously. Anti-corruption crusade could also be the one that compelled a contractor to rush back to site before a project is hurriedly completed. Such inordinate rush would not lead to a quality job but to do "anything". On the long run, such hasty projects do not last long or benefit the masses.

Above all, there is deliberate sabotage by some people because of political rivalry. Rival political opponents are sometimes fond of this. Opposition party members deliberately sabotage public projects to discredit a serving political official. This sometimes comes up when civil transition is around the corner (Sull, 2019). The motive is to make sure that there is no feasible project or achievement for canvassing elections. They deliberately remove or destroy projects of a ruling government so as to dislodge it from office. In another vein, many opposition party members in the same constituent may not want a political group, who are likely to be re-elected if they have some legacies (projects) that could attract votes. In other words, to reduce the popularity of a rival serving politician, an opposition party might arrange to destroy ongoing project, to enable them use the person's non-performance as basis of campaign. In some situation, the lapses in the executed project, if it is invariably completed might be basis of campaign.

Intrigues of Public Officers that Subvert Public Projects

The challenge of not having a public project actualized in line with the set standard is always disheartening. The attitude of public officials could not be divorced from project failure. Disposition of policy initiator has been linked to failure of some public projects from meeting up the standard. Project initiators knowingly or unknowingly have been part of the challenges that kill project initiatives. For instance, some policy initiator labels public project as a personal one. For policy initiative to achieve the desired motive, all public projects must be tagged "public." It is a common thing, especially among politicians in Nigeria to see them naming public projects in their names. Some stakeholders, who do not like such personal aggrandizement, could destroy such project. Destroying the project is a loss to the public.

In addition, what is tagged direct project is sometimes not properly monitored. Usually, projects should be awarded by allowing contractors to bid for them through a fair and open tender. The essence of doing so is to allow for a competitive bidding, and follow due process. This is to allow government picks the best among the numerous tenders. However, paucity of funds halts the use of tender. Instead of a fair tender process government implements the project itself on direct labor. The direct labor projects are not always properly done (Tigor, 2019). To some policy analyst, direct labor projects are conduit-pipe to drain public funds. It is not to say that carrier officers who could successfully implement the projects are not skillful enough, but at times do not display the needed charisma for accelerated delivery. Therefore, they keep their expertise. Up-to-date equipment is also not available to some of them, while others are not current in their area of specialization. In some cases when the

required equipment is available, it could develop a sudden fault; because they are not frequently used. In view of this, they could not deliver the project targets that are required.

Many times, there is no mandatory policy ideology that policy actor should follow. Under a democratic regime, it is expected that party manifestoes translate to public projects. It is also expected that similar level of government within a geographical zone should be able to follow a common path, by pursuing identical projects that would enhance the living standard of the people. The similar level of government ought to influence one another positively (Suberu, 2022). Even, with the variation in financial capacity of tiers of government, they could still have common focus that political party would have outlined as its manifestoes. Sadly, manifestoes only serve as campaign tools; they do not ‘fully’ translate to projects of government. The variation makes elected public officers to pursue different projects that please them without minding the impact of such projects on people’s life. In Nigeria, due to ‘absence of party ideology’, policy initiatives are more based on personal intuition of public actors. With such mindset, projects that ought to change people’s life only turn out to be waste of public funds.

Policy priority is also sometimes for primordial purpose. There are instances when projects are done, not because of the good it would bring on the people but simply because a project initiator wants something in his constituency. At times, political actor embarks on construction of roads, establishment of higher institution, citing of solar lights and so on when they are not actually needed in such areas or that point in time. The people project initiators represent lobby them for public projects. Projects are therefore cited in some places, not because those constituencies actually need them, at that point in time, but because they have somebody in power. It is unfortunate that they do not bother whether those things will impact on the people living in those areas or not. This has made projects that worth millions of naira to be cited in areas that cannot sustain them. There are several bore-holes in rural areas, where there is no electricity. Several other public projects such as Gaari factory, oil processing firm, fruit processing company are cited in areas just because that is where a governor, minister or commissioner comes from, whereas there are no raw materials required for those facilities to be productive. For instance, when a government cites Gaari firm in areas that lack cassava, or oil processing firm in areas that lack palm trees, or Beverages Company where there is no coffee or cocoa plants amount to waste of funds. Such venture cannot do the public much good.

Poor maintenance culture equally makes public projects to degenerate. A number of good projects suffer decline due to poor maintenance. It is rampant to see projects, which need small amount of money not being attended to until millions of naira is needed to put them back to use. There are huge losses when roads that need little asphalt patching develop into deep gully. Other instances are a school classroom that needs few iron sheets being abandoned, and new ones newly awarded. This calls for worry, when in actual fact, little amount of money is just needed to repair the abandoned one. Similar fate sometimes befalls vehicles, when they are abandoned just because one of the tires is not good. Bore holes that requires just a routine maintenance could be abandoned until it could not be repaired again. There is the general or deliberate negligent of public projects, because a past regime put them in place, until they become almost impossible to repair them.

Bureaucracy in taking decisions also berates the use public projects. Public projects in the care of lower cadre officer (civil servant/elected politician), who are not capable of taking a final decision on their use or maintenance until it is approved by higher officials make public projects un-useful. Sometimes, due to benefit of higher positions, some higher authority does not feel the pain that people, who directly use the project feel at the bottom level. Higher authorities sometimes dilly-dally until a project rescue-mission is defeated. Even, when lower actors are allowed to exercise certain power of financial expenditure, they still complain of request for bribe by higher authority. Thus, approval for what should ordinary be done within few days or weeks may not see the light of the day for months.

Disdain for award of contract with little sums of money. It appears public actors no longer have interest in the award of contract that cost little sum of money. It is common to see project that is not up to a million of naira suffering neglect. Public officials are fond of neglecting a project that is to be done with few thousands of naira. The politicians call such projects as “non-profitable” (Biezen, 2021). The implication is that they are not likely to make much gain from unprofitable project. In view of this belief, members of the public would need to suffer and wait until the project becomes fallow (Suberu, 2022). Thinking like this therefore becomes worrisome, whether it is the welfare of the public that really needs quick attention or the gain that would be made by public officials that should be priority.

Another bad attitude is the rush for new inventions without satisfactory interrogation into means of sustaining them. With the upsurge in technological innovations in all sectors, projects construction is not left out. Yet, adequate care is needed so as not be victim of fake spare parts or items that daily flood Nigeria’s market. These new inventions are in all areas of human needs (Suberu, 2022). Members of the public including government officials rush to use the new items. Unfortunately, most of them are not durable. Many of the fake items are only branded as new. With huge sum of money, that some of those fake items consumed, they only become mere decoration once they are damaged or mistaken for original. Several flashy government cars, solar

lights, electrical gadgets, office equipment, and so on fall into this category.

Expected Roles of State Actors in Projects Pursuits

Government must strive, to ensure a good life is provided for the people. In the view of (Adama, 2021), government owes a duty to make sure people live well. It is the responsibilities of government to make sure the people are provided with good things of life. As a result of the above duties, public project providers must use public funds to provide succor for the citizenry. Life is better for everyone, when basic facilities of life are available, both in quality and quantity (Schlesinger, 2020). The joy of everyone lies in the fact that there is value for public funds. In view of the desire for improved living, all public projects must be in good standard and justify public funds allocated to them. It is therefore expected of state actors saddled with the provision and maintenance of public projects to discharge their roles in a way that members of the public enjoy the gain (Sambo, 2015). The followings are few things the state actors (executive, legislature and judiciary) must do to bring the best out of public projects.

State actors must have the genuine interest of the public in mind. The genuine interest of members of the public is the only thing that would compel state actors to give the best in terms of project provision and maintenance. The only thing that can define 'genuine interest' is the desire that people must live well (Schlesinger, 2020). The state actors must not only strive for a better life for elite alone but ensure that others, who are not in any elective position, equally live happily. It is only the genuine commitment to put qualitative and quantitative projects in place that could ensure everyone enjoys life. Thus, equality to public facilities is one of the things that should enable the state actors to faithfully provide good public assets.

Public officials that award contracts must ensure there is no waste. Anything that constitutes waste in public realm must be avoided. Because waste is retrogressive and brings people back, time, energy, and resources (money or personnel) must be preserved to avoid waste, no matter how small. When government dissipates time, energy, resources, and personnel, it does not bring development. In addition, dissipation of time, resources kills ambition (Sulk, 2018). All allocated time and funds must be carefully deployed. Effort must be made to ensure that all ways that could result in waste of public funds are blocked.

All elected representatives must be close to their constituents. Several projects that cost billions of naira are not appreciated by members of the public, because they do not meet their immediate needs. It is necessary that there must be utilization from members of the public for projects executed by the state. As remarked by Ayo (1985), the only thing that can lead to appreciation of a project by members of the public is when such projects meet their immediate needs. This is why government through the elected representatives must be close to their constituents and sensitive to their immediate needs.

All planned and completed projects must be coated in public spirit. Government does not owe anything in isolation, if it does not touch on the public lives. In view of this, state actors must try as much as possible to build in the spirit of confidence in public projects. Sometimes, government can try to seek financial commitment from members of the public, no matter how small to build public commitment in its projects. If government finances the whole project, the public must be able to see the project as belonging to them. Building in public spirit in projects would make them to be protected. A lot of public projects have been abandoned, looted and destroyed because they do not serve public needs (Sull, 2019). Few ways to gain public spirit in public projects are for people to be working or having access to the services the project provides. Essentially, the services in such place must be affordable to people around the area. For instance, a public health center or school that recruits cleaners or guards would have first-hand information that is likely to protect and elongate life span of the facilities. If a police station truly secures a community, the public will see to its improvement from time to time.

It is important, as well, that government strives for the best. Members of the public are now more aware and have taste for good things. Public project, while going through implementation should always be the best (Abilor, 2018). State actors must put up the state-of-the-art facilities, both in outlook and longevity. From the outset, public projects must attract the people. When members of the public see a project as fantastic, it will be put to a serviceable ends. A project that has been patched and managed from outset will not attract people. This is why schools, roads, bridges and so on must be properly handled. For instance, many overhead bridges in Osun, Ogun, Kogi and Oyo states have been condemned in time past by members of the public as death traps. It took several media briefings before the misconception was erased.

All state actors should never discriminate. Any project, be it ongoing or completed should be seen as public asset, that belong to everyone. The elected, traditional, community leaders and other stakeholders should know that they need to protect public projects, not minding which political party puts them in place. The idea of destroying public projects because we do not like the face of the initiator is a dis-service to public goodness. It is important that state actors avoid writing personal names on public properties. The fact that public projects are government properties means they belong to everyone. It requires that state actors defreeze their mentality of self-serving attitude. This has led to poor maintenance of public projects by succeeding regimes.

Opportunities for Public Projects in Nigeria

Considering the level of development as regards Nigeria's public policy attainments, a number of key prospects abound, that supposed to be an advantage to ensure that public projects are enjoyed by the members of the public. Some of such opportunities are discussed hereunder: One, Nigeria is a democratic state that preaches free and fair election, human rights, rule of law, separation of power, due process, constitutionalism, and equality. Unlike a military regime, where things are done by force, hastily and without decorum for human rights, democracy that Nigeria subscribes to is an opportunity for people to freely express their feelings (Sulk, 2018). Thus, the Nigerian public should have opportunity to request for projects that would bring those benefits through public opinion. Current democratic practice, since 29th May, 1999 ought to enable the Nigerians request for projects that would change their lives.

Nigeria's democratic system presupposes that the citizens should have a say on issues that affect their welfare. Doing this is an avenue to having a people-oriented policy (Sulk, 2018). Democracy should bring about a smooth change of government, and enable the people to change a regime that is not keen on people's welfare (Dayoor, 2018). In a way, Nigeria should be able to use its population that is close to 180 million to bring about desirable changes in the direction of governance. Nigeria ought to have gone beyond sit down and look. To use the words of Gunther (2021), votes of the people should be directed towards putting representatives that have real interest of the people in office. Nigeria's four-year periodic election and opportunity for a second term both at the national and sub-national levels is a good prospect for retaining an elected representative, who delivers on his promises. As posited by Yusuff et al. (2017), election period is also an opportunity to remove a representative who does not care about the welfare of the people. Any public office holder who does not do well in the first term should not be returned for another term. The electorates have the opportunity of using power of the ballot to remove any political office holder, who feels unconcerned about the welfare of the people. Government officials have a reasonable time to plan and implement their policies for the good of the masses (Akinola, 2021). The electorates can as well vote out corrupt government officials who are not willing to provide laudable projects for the people.

In addition, the country operates a presidential system of government, where checks and balances are operational. In the system, one organ of government should be able to check the other. Power is separated among the three organs of government and not concentrated in one organ of government. Such separation is to ensure that there is no abuse of power by any organ of government in policy formulation, or implementation, and that no organ of government abuses its office (Biezen, 2021). The oversight function of the lawmakers should be carried out discreetly. While we are of the opinion that discharge of oversight function by the lawmakers should not be overstretched, or for monetary gain, lawmakers are constitutionally protected to monitor project-compliant with regard to tender specification. Lawmakers should work in public interest rather than for 'share-to-share' syndrome (Tigor, 2019). If oversight is appropriately utilized, it should provide Nigerians an opportunity to have a robust project. For instance, projects carried out by the president, ministers, commissioners, and officials of government, both at the national and subnational levels are expected to be oversight by the legislature (Sambo, 2015). If this is faithfully done, the best would be achieved.

Education is a vital agent of development, if it is allowed to fulfill its role. With several colleges of education, polytechnics and universities including research institutes in the country, our project pursuits should be robust. The National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure charged with the coordination of research and development of technologies relevant to small and medium enterprises should be able to chart a good course for the country's engineering work. There is also the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research at Ibadan that conducts social and economic policy primarily for the national government. According to Terry, (2022), there are sixty-nine research institutes in Nigeria. The research exercises that are daily carried out by the higher institution of learning and research institutes should be able to solve our project need challenges. It is reported that most public projects that were put in place in the early 1980s and late 1990s, such as Operation Feed the Nation and Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure, DIFRRI were results of consultations with Nigeria's research institutes. In addition, there is National Institute of Policy and Strategic Study is in Kuru, Jos, where leading political, administrative and bureaucratic personnel are trained and exposed to their required working etiquettes.

Nigeria has appreciable skilled bureaucrats and officials that are well trained over the years. The outputs from these experts should be helpful to having public-driven projects. There are knowledge productions from where the country can sufficiently tap from. The trainings and workshops for the high-ranking elected and appointed political, and public servants are to bring out the best in them given the prerequisite for the recognition of transparency, accountability, commitment, efficiency, effectiveness and service delivery. Besides, the country has several professors, scholars and public commentators and bureaucrats, who are trained and retrained through local and international conferences and workshops. Nigerians can also express their interest, satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Nigerians are expected to make use of the social media to express their desires (Bizzy, 2021). Through interviews and expression of opinions on twitter, face-book, and websites, government are easily

reached. There is a popular saying now that ‘if you see something, says something.’ There are ample chances for Nigerians to put up information that is capable of sustaining public projects. Any deceptive way of implementing public projects could be easily exposed. Anti-graft agencies could be informed on any corrupt practice in public projects that are capable of bringing us future trauma. Thus, government officials could easily get feedbacks on their activities, including projects done.

There also exist political parties. Presently, there are about sixty-seven political parties from which the ruling All Progressive Congress {APC} emerged at the national level. The People’s Democratic Party is also having about it controls. The multi-party system that Nigeria operates supposed to be good opportunity for fair competition to do well. The country’s party system should bring manifestoes that will lead to good programs. At the same time, numerous opposition political parties are expected to ensure fantastic projects are embarked upon by government of the day. Aside of numerous political parties, there are interest groups, labor unions and civil society groups that should constantly put the ruling government on its toe, so that it could do well.

Nigeria’s constitution is written, supreme and rigid. There should not be abuse of power or office. The constitution defines the rights, and limits of government powers and functions. All public projects must have implementation monitoring units. It should be easy to contact government officials, if we have a genuine report on any shady deal of a contractor. All public projects should have identity of project client and contractor (Cole, 2018). This is a good avenue to know whom to contact for any dissatisfaction on ongoing project. If we remain silent, the consequence would be bore by everyone in the country. Above all, Nigeria is blessed with a lot of natural resources that earn the country enormous wealth. Aside of petroleum, Nigeria is also blessed with natural gas, tin, ore, coal, limestone, zinc and fertile land. Such resources are should be judiciously tapped for the good of everyone. The resources ought to serve as catalyst to pave way for the provision of water, and construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of feeder road.

Conclusion

The provision of public projects in Nigeria is not presently satisfactory. In terms of quality and quantity of public projects, Nigeria is at low ebb. Public projects production is in a state of decline and depression. Many public projects have not better the lives of Nigerians. The desire for putting up public projects is yet to be actualized. The observable anomalies in the current provision and utilization of few public projects that were put in place suggest that members of the public (the masses) have not substantially benefited from enormous financial expenses committed to Nigerian public projects. The implication of this is that project initiators have not achieved the motive for which public projects are meant, which should be “public satisfaction.”

Recommendations

It is important that a number of policy options be considered to ensure that public projects in Nigeria truly meet peoples’ needs. With the appalling state of public projects in Nigeria, public policy drive should be directed towards exploring opportunities that are open in the country, which include the followings. All public projects need to be adequately prioritized. Given the fact that rural and urban areas, educated and non-educated, civil servants and artisans may not need the same thing at the same time, it is important that state actors weigh the options before them to determine things that members of the public need at every point in time. It is certain that Nigerians, in the categories stated above, may not need a common thing at the same time, hence desires can be mixed to accommodate all shades of opinion. By doing this, nobody would be left out or have open vengeance for public projects provision

This is the time for all Nigerians to develop a civic culture of protecting public projects as ‘common assets.’ If Nigerians have a new orientation that all public projects are put in place with public money, and for the good of all, then our priority would be higher to protecting them. The new orientation would also make everyone to understand that all wastes, destruction and abandonment of public projects are retrogressive. Hence, all hands must be on deck to prevent wastes in terms of funds or time.

State actors or project initiators should desist from tagging public projects as personal. There should be an Act of the National Assembly that would ban the idea. Henceforth, it should become a criminal act for any politician to tag a public project in his name or that of his political father. If it would be done at all, the parliament must approve such decision. The law, when put in place, should be domesticated across the states.

State actors must be prudent to pursue projects that are feasible. All white elephant projects that only drain public purse must be stopped. The parliament must stand firm to ensure that public projects are no longer tunnels for draining public funds. The oversight function of the lawmakers must be faithfully discharged. Execution of public projects should no longer be avenue for sharing the national cake. All projects that do not do people much good should be discouraged.

Efforts must be made to ensure that public projects, once commenced; must be completed. As a result, projects must be appropriated to prevent them from being abandoned. There should be an Act that would make abandonment of public projects a serious governance offence. In view of this, projects should only be embarked

upon, when the required funds to complete them are fully available and have been budgeted. If, for any reason, ongoing projects could not be completed, the initiator of such projects should transmit the reason(s), in writing, to the parliament for consideration. A project should not commence on the probability of securing a second term in office. Having, transmitted the reasons for inability to complete a project to the lawmaker, and accepted through a resolution; the succeeding regime, must as a matter of compulsion complete the project. No public funds should be wasted again.

The idea of direct labor must be re-visited. It is more or less an attempt to divert public funds. Direct labor projects must conform to quality assurance. To be sure of the quality assurance, a fairly number of years must be arrived at as 'guarantee-period.' Any project, be it awarded or direct labor, must satisfactorily meet the guarantee-period, failure which a refund to put the project back into use must be made. Community leaders and associations, traditional rulers, and civil society groups must be assertive to report any observed shady deal in execution of public projects to the lawmaker, and follow up on it. It should become a serious offence to find an abandoned or un-used project in any community. Except, where the stakeholders in such areas have reported an abandoned or un-used public project to government, they should be liable for prosecution.

The overhead cost on governance is too much. This has no doubt made provisions of public project a mirage. It is necessary to reduce the overhead cost of political office holders. It is high time; the heavy payments of political officers be stopped, to enable the generality of Nigerians benefit from public treasury. The heavily monetized politics, especially nomination forms, campaign and buying of votes must be eradicated. When politicians spend heavily before they win elections into political office, award of projects remains one of the sure ways they explore to make monetary gain on their political expenses. This is why politicians need to spend less. We need to implement existing electoral law on the limit to which a contender should spend. Taking this step would be a right decision to help the commoners.

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