



Nigeria's National Population Policy and its Implications for Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT

Given the prevailing view that population policy has the potentials to reduce pressure of population on development and the attendant improvement of the welfare of people in society now and in the future, population policy has become an integral part of the overall development policies of most Third World countries as we enter the 21st century. This paper compared Nigeria's national population policy and programme with those of other Third World countries and examined the implications for sustainable development in the 21st century, considering the trend of events in the country since 1999. It argued that when compared to those of China and India in terms of some specific goals and targets, promotional and motivational measures to enhance compliance, the necessary sanctions for non-compliance of the policy and looking at the trend of events in the country since the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)-led government in 1999, the Nigerian population policy could be said to be neither anti-natalistic nor pronatalistic but rather genocidal and anti-Niger Deltans. It concluded that the Nigerian national population policy as currently composed and implemented can therefore not enhance the achievement of sustainable development in the 21st century. It suggested the incorporation of promotional and motivational measures that will enhance compliance and sanctions for non-compliance of the policy in the policy document for ease of its implementation, and thuggery-free elections as the way forward.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between population and development has been acknowledged by economists since the Smithian era. But while Adam Smith (1776) expressed an optimistic view about the relationship between population growth and development, Malthus (1798) was pessimistic about it.

However, since the Malthusian essay on population, much have been said and written about the potentials of high population growth rate in restraining development. For instance, Rice (2005) asserts that in recent times the question has always been asked, how can Africa progress and develop when its population is growing faster than its economies? It is in this

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context that Ojo (1997) asserts that the serious concern over the problem of high population growth and food supply in the developing countries has become central to the development of strategies being encouraged by multi-lateral organizations such as the World Bank and the United Nations development programmes (UNDP).

But behind these strategies are population policies which are believed to have the potentials to reduce the pressure of population on development and the attendant improvement of the welfare of the people. Infact the assertion by Abonyi (2007) that since poverty and rapid population growth go together, development will be significantly enhanced by controlling population size, lends credence to this belief. It is in this context that Dobson (1975) asserts that since the primary goal of development is to increase human welfare and population policy forms a vital means of achieving this goal, many countries tend to integrate population policies with their overall development policies.

Today, the emphasis is not only on development per se, but on sustainable development which seeks to improve the wellbeing of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generations to improve their wellbeing. Thus, the pertinent question is looking at the population policy and programmes of Nigeria in relation to those of other countries, and considering the trend of events in the country since 1999, is Nigeria capable of achieving sustainable development in the 21st century via population policy and programmes? This is the crux of the matter.

This article therefore compares Nigeria's national population policy and programmes with those of other countries and examines the implications for sustainable development in the 21st century, considering the trend of events in the country since 1999. The article is structured into eight sections. Section two takes care of conceptual issues while section three looks at the linkage between population policy and sustainable development. Section four examines population policies in other countries while section five takes care of Nigeria's national population policy and programmes. Section six compares Nigeria's population policy and programmes with those of other countries, while section seven discusses the implications of Nigeria's population policy and programmes for sustainable development in the 21st century, and section eight is the concluding remarks.

Conceptual Issues

It is important to conceptualise the key terms such as population policy and sustainable development as this will enhance our comprehension of the issues involved.

Population Policy

Although the United Nations (1973) has argued that there is no generally accepted definition of population policy, Lucas et al (1980) have been able to

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provide one for our purpose. According to them a population policy refers to all deliberate government actions (be they laws, regulations or administrative programmes) intended to influence population growth, size, distribution and composition. Thus, population policies include migration policy, for instance policy on rural-urban migration, fertility policy etc. The aim of these actions according to the United Nations (1973) is to facilitate the achievement of government's population goals.

A country's population policies may be direct or indirect; explicit or implicit; they can equally be said to be anti-natalistic or pro-natalistic in nature, depending on the country's need.

Sustainable Development

For ease of our comprehension of the concept of sustainable development it is important to throw some light on development itself. It is a commonly held view that development is a complex concept with a plethora of interpretations from various schools of thought in the social sciences. For instance its meaning has progressed from its narrow conception in terms of a rise in per capita income in the 1950s and 1960s to a broader one. Infact currently, development is defined qualitatively as a process of improvements in the general welfare of the entire society usually manifested in desirable changes in the various aspects of the life of the society such as: (i) a reduction in the level of unemployment (ii) a reduction in the extent of personal and regional inequalities; (iii) a reduction in absolute poverty; (iv) a rise in real output of goods and services and improvement in techniques of production; (v) improvement in literacy, health services, housing and government services; (vi) improvement in the level of social and political consciousness of the people; (vii) greater ability to draw on local resources both human and materials to meet local needs (self reliance); and (viii) a reduction in pollution and/or environmental degradation (Akpakpan, 1987; and Wilson 2002). It is in this context that Okowa (1997) defines development as the process whereby a society changes in all its ramifications in a direction that is beneficial to all her citizens or at least to a majority of them.

However, today the emphasis is not on development per se, but on sustainable development which Abonyi (2007) asserts has become a buzz word since the Brundtland report of 1987. Consequently, the 1987 Brundtland Commission defines sustainable development in terms of "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Hence sustainable development could be seen as development strategy that caters for the needs of the present without even compromising the ability of future generations to fulfil or meet their own needs (Uzuegbunam, 2005).

Otherwise stated, it is development that meets the needs of the present generation without preventing future generations from meeting their own needs. According to Olaniyan, Oyeranti, and Bankole (2001), the consideration for sustainability suggests that the welfare of the future

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generation should not be less than that of the current generation. According to them, it implies that the stock of renewable resources should be maintained and the economy should save over and above the depreciation rates of both man-made and natural resource capital. It is in this context that the World Bank, cited in Abonyi (2007) asserts that sustainability is in the heart of all successful development efforts and that sustainability first and foremost means that resources, including human resources are enhanced or protected rather than damaged or depleted as part of the development process. According to Abonyi (2007), in order to realise sustainable development absolute poverty will have to be eliminated so that the poorest people can be able to produce or purchase the food, clothing and housing necessary to ensure good health and self respect; and that ending absolute poverty will call for improved access to education, health care, clean water, sanitation and above all, controlling population size, since poverty and rapid population growth often go together.

Population Policy and Sustainable Development: Inter-Relations

Although the link between population and development has been acknowledged since the Smithian and Malthusian era, the current worldwide interest in, and debate about world population growth and human welfare is traceable to the first World Population Conference held in Bucharest-Romania, in August 1974. Since then and coupled with the Brundtland Commission Report of 1987, rapid population growth has been said to have potential adverse consequences on the wellbeing of mankind presently and in the future, throughout the world. It is in this light that Todaro (1992) posits that:

If development entails the improvement in people's levels of living—their incomes, health, education and general wellbeing, and if it also encompasses their self esteem, respect, dignity and freedom to choose, then the really important question about population growth is: how does the contemporary population situation in many Third World countries contribute to or detract from their chances of realising the goals of development not only for the current generation but also for future generations?

Rapid population increase is also said to have negative impact on development through its adverse effects on (i) the quantity and quality of social services like housing, transport, sanitation and social security; (ii) employment; (iii) food supply; (iv) coverage and quality of health and educational facilities; and (v) the standard of living of the people (Todaro, 1992; Jhingan, 1996; and Ojo, 1997). It is in this context too that Uzuegbunam (2005) posits, in the case of Nigeria that:

Nigeria will double in size in 24 years unless the present high rate of population growth is controlled. This means that by the year 2025 there will be an additional 118 million people in the population than in 2001. The country will therefore have to double its infrastructure

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for food production, health services, education, water supply, housing, energy and other services in the next 24 years even to sustain the present day low standard of living.

Consequently, Berelson (1974) has said that the question of population should be framed not simply in terms of numbers or densities or rate or movements, but with full consideration of:

The qualities of human life; prosperity in place of poverty; education in place of ignorance and health; environmental beauty in place of deterioration; full opportunities for the next generations of children in place of current limitations. Population trends if favourable, open new options and enlarge his choices. Thus, population policy is not an end, but only a means – a means to a better life. That is what the concern about population is about or ought to be.

Thus, population policy is necessary as such policies help to reduce the pressure of population on development and the attendant improvement in the welfare of the people now and in the future. In the specific case of Nigeria, the national population policy was launched because of the following reasons – the very high rate of natural increase, the juvenile dependency ratio, and the rapid and increasing migration of people into the urban areas (Udo, 1993).

Population Policies of Other Countries

Our concern in this section is to examine population policies of other countries in order to see the variation in population policies among countries as we enter the 21st century. The three countries selected for examination in this paper namely China, India and Brazil share the same status as developing nations with Nigeria and whose population policies are generally anti-natalistic in nature, so as to reduce the high rate of population growth. For instance, China and India in Asia are the most populous nations in the world and Asia is the next fast growing continent population wise after Africa, while Brazil is the most populous nation in Latin America just as Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa. So let us take them in turns.

(a) Chinese Population Policy

China is the most populated country in the world. When China took its first census in 1953, the population stood at 582 million, but by the fifth census in 2000, the population had more than doubled, reaching 1.2 billion. The population was put at 1.3 billion (1,321,000,000) people in 2007 and 1,338,612,968 people in 2009.

Chinese fast growing population had been a major policy matter for its leaders. Thus beginning in the mid 1950s the Chinese government introduced with varying degrees of success, a number of family planning or population

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control campaigns and programmes. And in order to alleviate the social, economic, and environmental problems arising from the fast growing population in china, the Chinese government publicly announced the stringent one-child population policy in 1979. The policy officially restricts the number of children that married urban couples can have to one, although it allows exemptions for several cases such as rural couples, ethnic minorities and parents who are only children themselves.

Like the previous programmes of the 1960s and 1970s, the 'one-child' policy employs a combination of public education, social pressures and in some cases coercion. But to ensure compliance, a sophisticated system rewards those who observes the policy and penalises those who do not. For instance, couples with only one child are given a 'one-child certificate' entitling them to such benefits as cash bonuses, longer maternity leave, better child care and preferential housing assignments. In return, they are required to pledge that they will not have more children. On the other hand, couples with more than one-child are required to pay a family planning fine which is collected as a multiple of either the annual disposable income of city dwellers or the annual cash income of peasants as determined each year by the local statistics office. They also have to pay for both the children to go to school and all the family health care.

In the rural areas the day to day work of family planning is done by cadres at the team and brigades levels who are responsible for women's affairs and by health workers. The women's team leader makes regular household visits to keep track of the status of each family under her jurisdiction and collects information on which women are using contraceptives, the methods used, and which had become pregnant. She then reports to the brigade women's leader who documents the information and takes it to a monthly meeting of the commune birth planning committee.

The ceilings or quotas have to be adhered to; so in order to satisfy these cut offs, unmarried young people are persuaded to postpone marriage; couples without children are advised to wait their turn; women with unauthorised pregnancies are pressured to have abortion; and those who already have children are urged to use contraceptives or undergo sterilization. Couples with more than one child are exhorted to be sterilised.

(b) India's National Population Policy

India is the second most populous country in the world. India's population was put at 1027.8 million or 1.027 billion people in 2002 and an estimated figure of 1.162 billion in 2010. Population growth in India continued to be high due to a number of factors such as the large size of the population in the reproductive age-group (54 percent), higher fertility due to unmet need for contraception, highly wanted fertility due to the high infant mortality rate, and the fact that over 50 percent of girls marry below the age of 18, the minimum legal age of marriage.

Consequently, the national population policy was put in place in 2000 with the immediate objective of addressing the unmet needs for contraception, health care infrastructure and health care. The medium-term objective was to bring the total fertility rate (TFR) to replacement level by 2010 through vigorous implementation of inter-sectoral operational strategies. The long-term objective was to achieve a stable population by 2045 at a level consistent with the requirement of sustainable economic growth, social development and environmental protection (government of India, 2000).

In pursuance of the above objective the national socio-demographic goals to be achieved in each case by 2010 were formulated as follows:-

(i) address the unmet needs for basic reproductive and child health services, supplies and infrastructure; (ii) make school education up to age 14 free and compulsory, and reduce drop-outs at primary and secondary school levels to below 20 percent for boys and girls;(iii) reduce infant mortality rate to below 30 per 1000 live births;(iv) reduce maternal mortality rate to below 100 per 100,000 live births;(v) achieve universal immunization of children against all vaccine preventable diseases;(vi) promote delayed marriage for girls not earlier than age 18 and preferably after 20 years of age;(vii) achieve 80 percent institutional deliveries and 100 percent deliveries by trained persons;(viii) achieve universal access to information/counselling and services for fertility regulation and contraception with a wide basket of choices;(ix) contain the spread of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) and promote greater integration between the management of reproductive track infection (RTI) and sexually transmitted infection (STI) and the National AIDS Control Organization; (x) prevent and control communicable diseases; (xi) achieve 100 percent registration of births, deaths, marriages and pregnancy; (xii) integrate Indian system of medicine (ISM) in the provision of reproductive and child health services and in reaching out to households;(xiii) promote vigorously the small family norm to achieve replacement levels of TFR; and (xiv) bring about convergence in implementation of related social sector programmes so that family welfare becomes people centred programme.

To ensure compliance on adoption of the small family norm, the government put in place a number of promotional and motivational measures. These measures included the following:

(i) rewarding and honouring some states e.g. Panchagats and Zila Panshad for exemplary performance in universalising the small family norm, achieving reduction in infant mortality and birth rates and promoting literacy with completion of primary schooling; (ii) award of a cash incentive of RS500 (rupees) at the birth of the girl child of birth order 1 or 2 by the Department of Women and Child Development, in order to promote survival and care of the girl child; (iii) continuation of the Maternity Benefit Scheme, run by the Department of Rural Development. Thus a cash incentive of RS500 is awarded to mothers who have their first child after 19 years of age, for birth of the first or second child only. Disbursement of the cash award was to be linked in the future to compliance with ante-natal check up,

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institutional delivery by trained birth attendant, registration of birth, and B.C.G immunization; (iv) establishment of a family welfare-linked Health Insurance Plan, in which couples below the poverty line who undergo sterilization with not more than two living children would become eligible, along with the children for health insurance (for hospitalisation) not exceeding RS5000, and a personal accident insurance cover for spouse undergoing sterilisation; (v) reward for couples below the poverty line who marry after the legal age of marriage, register the marriage, have their first child after the mother reaches the age of 21, accept the small family norm, and adopt a terminal method after the birth of the second child. (vi) setting up a revolving fund for income-generating activities by village-level self-help groups who provide community-level health care service; (vii) opening of Crèches (day care centres) and child care centres in rural areas and urban slums which will facilitate and promote participation of women in paid employment; (viii) making accessible at diverse delivery points, a wider and affordable choice of contraceptives with counselling services to enable acceptors to exercise voluntary and informed consent; (ix) strengthening and expanding facilities for safe abortion; (xii) making products and services affordable through innovative social marketing schemes; (xi) providing soft loans and encouraging local entrepreneurs at village levels to run ambulance services to supplement the existing arrangements for referral transportation; (xii) encouraging increased vocational training scheme for girls to enhance self-employment; (xiii) strict enforcement of Child Marriage Registration Act of 1971 and the Pre-natal Diagnostic Technique Act of 1994; (xiv) Increase in soft loans to ensure mobility of the ANMs; finally, the 42nd Constitutional Amendment that froze the number of representatives in the Lok Sabha on the basis of population of the 1971 census levels was extended to 2001, and to be extended to 2026 would serve as an incentive for states to fearlessly pursue the agenda for population stabilization (Government of India, 2000).

(c) Brazil's Family Planning and Population Policy

Brazil is the 5th most populous nation in the world and the most populous country in Latin America. Brazil's population was put at 119 million in 1980, 176, 319, 621 million in 2000 and increased to 190, 010, 647 million people in 2009.

The rapid growth of Brazil's population is informed by three factors viz; historical ante-cedents, the pro-natalist attitude of the government, and liberal immigration policy. During the colonial period Portugal (her colonial master) encouraged population growth in order to exert firm control over the country's vast but sparsely populated regions. Thus, during the slave trade era, a large number of African slaves were introduced and the country's expanding population became racially mixed.

Equally, the subsequent governments of Brazil, after independence in 1822 continued to stress the need to expand the population and encouraged

immigration. Thus, European immigration was vigorously promoted not only to dilute the population's African ancestry, but also because during the 1900s population growth became increasingly identified with the nation's destiny.

However, in the 1950s and 1960s despite the continuing pro-natalist attitudes of the government, the country's middle and upper classes began to practice family planning such that by 1965 the country's fertility rate began to decline. For instance, between 1970-1978, the fertility rate declined from 4.911 to 3.983 although the rate among the poor remained high. So, in 1965, the medical profession established the Brazilian Society of Family Welfare (BEMFAM) purposely to promote and provide family planning services, especially for the poor. The organization provided these services through the existing network of private and municipal health facilities and worked in co-operation with many local and state governments. BEMFAM's goal was to promote individual and family well-being believing strongly that the national government would assume responsibility for providing these services to the Brazilian population.

In 1974, the Brazilian government presented a statement at the World Population Conference in Bucharest, that led many to believe that government's attitude towards population growth had changed. The statement recognised the right of all couples to have the number of children they wanted and the responsibility of the government to ensure that the poor also had this right. Furthermore, in 1978 President Geisel expressed fear of the consequences of continued population growth and president, Figueiredo, equally noted that progress in family planning was a pre-requisite for the continued social and economic development of the country.

As observed by Sanders (1984), despite these public statements, the government has failed to implement effective population policies. It now provides limited family planning services through the existing network of private hospitals and clinics. These services are provided in the context of the government's maternal and child health programme. And the programme is understaffed and underfinanced, and as a result, the family planning component is frequently ignored. The programme's lack of support stems from the pro-natalist views still held by many government officials, especially national level officials of the Catholic Church.

Nigeria's National Population Policy And Programmes

Nigeria is the 8th most populous nation in the world and the most populous country in Africa. The 1991 census put the population of Nigeria at 88,992,220 people, while recent sources put the population at 123, 178, 818 in 2000 and 149, 229, 090 people in 2009.

It was not until February 4th, 1988 that the federal government of Nigeria adopted a national policy on population for development in response to the pattern of population growth rate and its adverse effect on national development (NPC and ORC Macro, 2004). Thus the national policy on population was put in place with the main objective of reducing population

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growth rate through voluntary fertility control. The policy encouraged voluntary regulation of the number of children which a woman should have to four, with the year 2000 set as the target year by which 80 percent of the women should attain the limit (Ojo, 1997). However, following the emerging issues highlighted by the 1991 national population census, the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, the 1999 AIDS/HIV Summit in Abuja, and other Fora, the national policy on population was revised on January 4th, 2004 by the Olusegun Obasanjo Administration.

The new policy purported to recognise the fact that population factors, social and economic development and environmental issues were irrevocably entwined and are all critical to the achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria (NPC and ORC Macro, 2004). The overall goal of the 2004 national policy on population for sustainable development was the improvement of the quality of life and the standards of living of the people of Nigeria. Consequently, the specific goals were the following:

(i) achievement of sustained economic growth, poverty eradication, protection and preservation of the environment and provision of quality social services; (ii) achievement of a balance between the rate of population growth, available resources and the social and economic development of the country; (iii) progress towards a complete demographic transition to reasonable birth rates and low death rates; (iv) improvement in the reproductive health of all Nigerians at every stage of the life cycle; (v) acceleration of a strong and immediate response to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS and other related infectious diseases; (vi) progress in achieving balanced and integrated urban and rural development.

To achieve these goals the 2004 population policy put on paper the following objectives:- (i) increase understanding and awareness of the inter-relationships between population factors, social and economic development and their mutual importance to the long-term sustainable development; (ii) expand access and coverage and improve the quality of reproductive and sexual health care services; (iii) strengthen and expand a comprehensive family planning and fertility management programmes that ensures that all couples/individuals who want them have uninterrupted access to a reasonable range of contraceptive methods at affordable prices and is also adequately responsive to the needs of the infertile and sub-fertile couples; (iv) strengthen and improve safe motherhood programme to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity and enhance the health of women; (v) reduce infant and child mortality and improve the health and nutritional status of Nigerian children through expanded access to high-quality promotive, preventive and curative health care services; (vi) promote behaviour change communicative (BCC) programmes to increase reproductive and sexual health knowledge, awareness, and behavioural change among Nigerians; (vii) empower women to participate actively and fully in all aspects of Nigeria's development and effectively address gender issues; (viii) enhance the involvement of men in

reproductive health programme and health care; (ix) increase the integration of adolescents and young people in development efforts and effectively address their reproductive health and related needs; (x) increase and intensity coverage of population and family life education programmes; (xi) accelerate the integration of reproductive health and family planning concerns into sectoral programme and activities; (xii) use effective advocacy to promote and accelerate attitudinal change towards population and reproductive health issues among public and private sector leaders; (xiii) reduce and eventually eliminate harmful social and cultural practices that adversely affect the reproductive health of the population through promotion of behavioural change and appropriate legislation; (xiv) strengthen the national response to HIV/AIDS to rapidly control the spread of the epidemic and mitigate its social and economic impacts; (xv) encourage the integration of population groups with special needs, including nomads, refugees and displaced persons, the elderly persons with disabilities and remote rural dwellers into the development process; (xvi) accelerate progress towards integrated urban and rural development and balanced population distribution; (xvii) increased enrolment and retention of children, especially girls, in basic education and raise literacy levels among Nigerians; (xviii) accelerate the integration of population factors into development planning at national, state and local government levels; (xix) improve the population, social and economic data base; promote and support population and development research; and help leadership groups recognise the important contribution that planning and data utilization make to the good governance of Nigeria; and (xx) improve systems for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the population policy and for reviewing the policy at periodic intervals.

The government of Nigeria has set the goal of 2 percent population growth rate by 2015 or beyond in its national economic policy. Consequently, the targets set to guide policy, programme planning and implementation included the following: (i) achieve a reduction of the national population growth rate to 2 percent or lower by the year 2015; (ii) achieve a reduction in the total fertility rate of at least 0.6 children every five years; (iii) increase the modern contraceptive prevalence rate by at least 2 percentage points per year; (iv) reduce the infant mortality rate to 35 deaths per 1000 live births by 2015; (v) reduce the child mortality rate to 45 deaths per 1000 live births by 2015; (vi) reduce the maternal mortality rate to 125 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2010 and to 75 per 100,000 live births by 2015; (vii) achieve sustainable universal basic education as soon as possible prior to 2015; (iii) eliminate the gap between men and women in enrolment in secondary, tertiary, vocational and technical education and training by 2015; (ix) eliminate illiteracy by 2020; and (x) achieve a 25 percent reduction in the adult prevalence of HIV every five years.

Nigeria's Population Policy and Programmes Compared With Those of Other Countries

A cursory look at the population policies and programmes of the four countries under consideration would show that apart from Brazil whose population policy is pro-natalistic in nature, those of China, India and Nigeria could be said to be anti-natalistic in nature. In other words, like those of China and India, the population policy and programmes of Nigeria, based on the overall goals and targets on paper, ought to be anti-natalistic in nature. However, when looked at in terms of some specific goals and targets, the promotional and motivational measures to enhance compliance, the necessary sanctions for non-compliance of the policy, and the trend of events in the country since 1999, Nigeria's population policy could be said to be neither anti-natalistic nor pro-natalistic in nature but rather genocidal and anti-Niger Deltans. The instances below attest to this fact.

First, in terms of some specific goals and targets, it is observable for instance that while the Chinese population policy clearly specified the number of children that couples should have, for example, one child for couples in the urban areas, and not more than two children for couples in the rural areas or couples who are only children themselves, and India's policy specified two children for all couples, Nigeria's population policy loosely stated that it encouraged voluntary regulation of the number of children which a woman should have to four.

Second, while the population policies of China and India contain a number of promotional and motivational measures to enhance compliance and the necessary sanctions for non-compliance of the policy, that of Nigeria is grossly deficient in such promotional and motivational measures and sanctions.

Third, while the implementation of the policy is closely monitored to ensure effective application of the promotional and motivational measures and the sanctions by the Chinese and Indian governments, in the case of Nigeria, the policy exists only on paper. For instance, while the number of representatives in the national assembly from states that are not fearlessly pursuing the agenda for population stabilization are frozen by the Indian government, the Nigerian government uses population as basis for allocation of resources, including delineation of constituencies and representation in local, state and national assemblies.

Finally, in terms of the trend of events in the country since 1999, it is a known fact that the April 1999 general election that brought the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) into power, after many years of continuous military rule was highly rigged. And as if that was not enough, the PDP-led government, in order to hold on to power and retain its grip of the oil-rich Niger Delta region, recruited, trained and armed youths of the region preparatory to the 2003 general election that earned the name 'carry go'. During the election, the various armed groups were let loose to ensure that

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PDP was returned to power and control the Niger Delta region, which they co-operatively did especially in Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta States.

However, immediately after the election the post-election song changed its tone as the party stalwarts instigated one armed group against the other in their competition to loot the public treasuries and share the oil money. Thus, while the party stalwarts were pre-occupied with the looting of the national, state and local government treasuries and sharing the oil money, the various armed groups under different names such as cultists, volunteer forces, vigilantes etc, were busy causing mayhem as they fought themselves and/or ransacked entire communities, thus killing innocent citizens. Infact, The Reformer (2008) captured the situation vividly as it stated for Port Harcourt that:

Modestly speaking, for over five years now, no one day passes in Port Harcourt, capital of Rivers State without criminals committing one heinous crime or the other, thus inflicting constant pains, misery and sorrow on innocent citizens and particularly on children. Call it abduction, kidnappings, organised armed raids, out right senseless killings, maiming, violent stealing on motorbikes, and you are correct.

Indeed, the above situation had been the common occurrences in many parts of the Niger Delta region, particularly Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta States. Okowa (2005) rightly posits in this direction that the contemporary crises of violence, killings and destruction in Nigeria are inevitable, given the character of the governing class and the method by which the power to govern was acquired.

The various armed groups later on metamorphosed into a common umbrella name 'militants', with many bases in the creeks of the Niger Delta region, namely Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta States, from where they launched their abduction, kidnapping and hostage-taking operations, and the attendant disruption of economic activities apart from the loss of lives of innocent citizens. On the other hand, the federal government in an effort to curtail the activities of the militants, formed a Joint Military Task Force (JTF) comprising the army, navy, air-force and police and drafted them to the Niger Delta region. Here again, the number of innocent lives lost in the cross-fires between the JTF and militants were uncountable apart from the lives of the militants and members of the JTF as John (2008) aptly stated that;

There are reported cases of the JTF violating with impunity the serenity of community life and the fundamental rights of law abiding citizens. Every week, scores of innocent people are usually caught in the cross-fires and summarily dispatched to the great beyond.

That had been the true situation in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria and huge resources, both human and material have been wasted pretentiously to maintain peace in the area while the implementation of the population policy

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has been abandoned. For instance, the Weekly Star (2009) has it that the federal government has spent a whopping N400 billion on security in the Niger Delta area.

So, following the colossal losses in both human and material resources suffered by the federal government as a result of the militants' activities in the Niger Delta area, especially the destruction of oil installations and the attendant effect on oil production and revenue, as all oil companies pulled out of the area (The Hard Truth, 2009), the Umaru Musa Yar'Adua-led government introduced the amnesty deal with the militants, in 2009.

Today, even though the militants have pretentiously surrendered their guns and ammunitions, and they are camped in different rehabilitation centres at very huge financial costs (over N50 billion was budgeted) as allowances, there are still cases of abduction, kidnappings and assassination in the Niger Delta area and have even extended to the South-Eastern States of Abia, Imo, Anambra, Ebonyi and Enugu.

So from the foregoing it is not out of place to say that the Nigerian national population policy is neither anti-natalistic nor pro-natalistic but rather genocidal and anti-Niger Deltans for two reasons. First, the people who have been dieing in the cross-fires between the JTF and the militants include innocent people, both old and young from the Niger Delta area; and second, the resources that would have gone into implementing the national population policy as contained in the paper have been wasted or spent in killing, apart from innocent people, the youths of the area whom the formulators of the national population policy recruited, trained, armed and mobilised for their selfish ends.

The Implications of Nigeria's Population Policy and Programmes for Sustainable Development

The genocidal and anti-Niger Deltan's population policy of the PDP-led government of the federal republic of Nigeria has grave adverse consequences for sustainable development in Nigeria. To start with, looking at it in terms of some of the specific goals and targets, the promotional and motivational measures for compliance, their complete absence in Nigeria's population policy as compared to China and India's, would imply non-achievement of population stability. Therefore the chances of Nigeria realising the goals of development not only for the current generation but also for the future are very slim, because, as suggested by Uzuegbunam (2005) the country will have to double its infrastructure for food production, health services, education, water supply, housing, energy and other services in the next 24 years even to sustain the present day low standard of living.

Finally, sustainable development as stated in section 2.2, is a development strategy that caters for the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generations to fulfil or meet their own needs. Infact, the World Bank, cited in Abonyi (2007) asserts that

sustainability is in the heart of all successful development efforts. It further asserts that sustainability first and foremost means that resources, including human resources are enhanced or protected rather than damaged or depleted as part of the development process. This caveat, as it were, is very crucial for the attainment of sustainable development and therefore should not be violated.

However, looking at the population policy and programmes of Nigeria in terms of the trend of events in the country since the PDP-led government came into power in 1999; there is clear evidence of flagrant violation of this caveat on sustainable development. For instance, as observed in section 6 above in the process of installing democracy which itself is a component of development, the country has lost a large quantity of her real and potential human resources through the machinations of the political class (politicians). Thus, in the process of achieving democracy, human resources, of all resources have been damaged rather than enhanced or protected, as part of the development process.

Thus, from the foregoing, the truth remains that the genocidal and the anti-Niger Deltans population policy of the Nigerian nation has grave adverse consequences for sustainable development.

CONCLUSION

In concluding, let us relate the issue of population policy to achievement of sustainable development in the 21st century. To start with, it can be argued that a relationship exists between population growth and sustainable development. Second, the emerging literature shows some positive correlation between population policy and the achievement of sustainable development. The import is that a carefully formulated and diligently implemented population policy is capable of enhancing the achievement of sustainable development while the reverse holds for even well-formulated but poorly implemented one.

The Nigerian population policy is neither anti-natalistic nor pro-natalistic in nature as it is deficient in the promotional and motivational measures that would enhance compliance, and sanctions that would reduce non-compliance, as compared to those of China and India, but rather genocidal and anti-Niger Deltans as millions of lives from the area are being lost through the machinations of the political class. Thus, it is safe to conclude that the Nigerian population policy as currently formulated and implemented cannot enhance the achievement of sustainable development in the 21st century.

Incorporation of promotional and motivational measures to enhance compliance and sanctions for non-compliance in the document, so as to ease the implementation of the policy is necessary if we hope to achieve sustainable development. Finally, conducting elections that are free from the

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use of thugs by politicians is equally important. This is in line with the advise by Ndigbara (2009) that politicians should stop buying guns for youths for election purpose, because after the election, they abandon the youths and the guns remain with the boys who use them for other purposes. The much publicised amnesty deal with the militants by the PDP-led federal government which is intended to shield the sponsors of the militants is nothing short of a palliative. It will be useful as a means of addressing the matter if they are not re-engaged in the 2011 elections waiting by the corner, or election of politicians suspected and proved to use thugs are cancelled and the politicians banned from participating in politics, or even imprisoned at the individual level, or the party banned from presenting candidates if it is found to perpetrate the use of thugs in elections. It is our belief that such a stern measure will discourage the use of thugs and the eventual conduct of elections that are free from the use of thugs.

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