

## Mobilizing Social Groups And Popular Organizations For Economic Recovery And Self Reliance Of Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

The major contribution made in the paper is that social groups and popular organisations should operate as co-operatives where possible. These co-operatives can be used to (i) achieve increased domestic production of food, industrial raw materials and manufactured products; (ii) contribute to the process of making decisions which affect the lives of the masses; (iii) assist in instilling discipline and professional ethics in the members of the different organisations and the community.

**Keywords:** social groups, self-reliance, co-operative, management function

### INTRODUCTION

The emphasis in this paper is on the role of community organisations in the economic recovery and self-reliance of Nigeria. Nigeria's 1986 budget made a bold attempt to break with the practice in the past when the emphasis on public policy was urban-oriented. The need for increased food production and accelerated development of the rural sector is the cornerstone of the structural adjustment programme.

Economic recovery for Nigeria requires that the development programmes must be need-oriented self-reliant, based on an autonomous technological capacity and the development of society's collective personality. By need-orientation, it means the improvement of the quality of life of human beings and in the sa-

tisfaction of the basic needs, with priority given to the needs of the most disadvantaged. Hence, it requires that emphasis should be placed more on a normative approach than just the positive aspect of economic development. The concept of collectivity in development rules out the pursuit of self-interest whereby one tries to take as much from society as one can without contributing at least, an equivalent into it.

This paper holds that all hands must be on deck for the recovery and self-reliance of the Nigerian economy. By this is meant the mobilization of popular organisations at the community level. The challenge therefore is mobilising Nigeria's labour resources through the labour unions to generate greater productivity, such as the women folks through women organisations will make the homes stable, provide appropriate environment and solid foundation for the Nigerian youths and also mobilising professional organisations such as the farmer's co-operatives to contribute optimally to the country's social and economic development.

The use of self-reliance as a terminology in this paper presupposes the achievement of economic recovery. Nigeria must recover economically while the process of economic self-reliance and social justice have been developmental goals, the most important single factor contributing to the mass mobilization of the people is the network of rural organisations and the encouragement of the co-operative spirit in undertaking various community programmes.

This paper will focus on the role of popular organisations working within the context of a co-operative system, in the

economic recovery and self-reliance of Nigeria. We first examine how the economy got into the economic mess from which it has to recover.

### NIGERIA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH PERFORMANCE

Nigeria's economic growth performance during 1975-1984 period has its antecedent in the quadrupling of crude oil prices in 1973-74. The resulting large windfall gain enabled the country not only to expand public investment almost three-fold over the next two to three years but also to build up its foreign reserves. However, the overwhelming dependence of the economy on the oil sector had the inherent weakness of subjecting its growth performance to the instability of world oil market fluctuations.

The above point is better illustrated by Table 1 which presents data on the indicators which capture the essential elements of Nigeria's economic growth performance during 1975-84. Three types of growth indicators are displayed in Table 1. According to Oyejide et al [1], the indicator of aggregate output performance is the average annual growth rate of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). As shown by the trend of this indicator, the rapid growth inducing impact of the 1973-74 sharp increases in crude oil prices - and the expanded public investment which they made possible - carried through the first three years of the 1975-1984 period. Positive and impressive GDP growth rates were thus recorded up to 1977; although the rate fell steadily during the three years from over 10% in 1975 and 1976 down to 7% in 1977. Then, there was a sharp drop to a negative growth rate of -5.6% in 1978. Another sharp reversal occurred in 1979, this time in the desirable upward direction. Unfortunately, this rally turned out to be short-lived; the growth rate took a nose dive shortly thereafter and it remained in the negative range throughout 1984. Thus, GDP has fallen consistently through the first half of the 1980s; and in practical terms, Nigerians have had to endure several years of generally declining standard of living. This represents a clear and

concrete indicator of the current economic crisis.

There are two indicators on the table, which attempt to track the performance of domestic production for the local market. These are the indices of agricultural production and manufacturing output. According to the table, the trend of agricultural output represents a clear disaster case up till 1984. Over the 10 year period, agricultural output remained more or less stagnant at a level which was well below (about 10%) the 1975 performance. Given Nigeria's rapidly growing population (growing between 2.5% and 3.0% per annum), the consequences of a stagnant agriculture are obviously grim. The trend of manufacturing output was more reassuring during that period. Steady, though not dramatic, increases in output are recorded through the 1975-84 period, except when a fairly sharp drop is shown as the index declined from 307.4 to 251.4 between 1983 and 1984. This decrease of about 21% in manufacturing output was the ultimate reflection of the drastic shortage of industrial raw material inputs following tight control on imports which was progressively imposed from 1982 as a means of dealing with the increasing acute shortage of foreign exchange.

It seems that the proximate causes of the economic crisis are to be found in the external sector. Just as the oil (export) boom of the 1973-75 period created the growth-inducing resources which enhanced GDP growth rate up to 1977, the impact of subsequent events in the external sector is reflected in the GDP growth trend between 1978 and 1984. The external sector was dominated by oil export earnings. Foreign exchange earnings from the agricultural sector exhibited a mild upward trend until 1979, after which a marked decline occurred. This sector thus contributed somewhat to the economic crisis of the 1980s. But, the real culprit clearly appears to be the oil sector. As Table 1 shows, particular declines in the index of oil export earnings were faithfully reflected by corresponding decreases in the GDP growth rate. For instance, as the index dropped from 155.0 to 118.4 between 1977 and 1978,

TABLE  
SELECTED INDICATORS OF ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE 1975-85

Indicators	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
(a) Aggregate Output (DP Growth Rate.%)	10.7	10.4	6.6	-5.6	0.5	0.5	-5.2	-5.3	-6.7	0.6
(b) Domestic Production										
Index of Agricultural production (1975 = 100)	100.0	93.9	88.7	88.5	87.2	89.4	92.4	91.9	89.9	91.4
Index of manufacturing Production (1975 = 100)	100.0	123.8	131.1	148.6	221.6	233.1	245.9	322.3	307.4	251.4

(c) External Sector

Index of Agricultural Export Earnings (1975 = 100)	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Index of Agricultural Export Earnings (1975 = 100)	100.0	118.6	162.8	178.8	202.6	147.2	188.9	86.1	186.6	125.1
Index of Oil Export Earnings (1975 = 100)	100.0	138.5	155.0	118.4	222.7	296.4	264.1	175.3	157.8	191.9

SOURCES

- Central Bank of Nigeria, Lagos, Annual Reports and Statements of Accounts, Several Years.
- The World Bank, World Development Report, Several years.

The implementation of self-reliance... of alternative... cause the... self-reliant development... processes of national... One is national... occupation in Nigeria... rent restructuring... output.

the GDP growth rate fell from 6.6% to -5.6%. The consecutive year-to-year decreases of the index between 1980 and 1983 were also mirrored by similar declining GDP growth rates over the period. As the index regained an upward trend between 1983 and 1984, the GDP growth rate also improved.

On the other hand, the balance of payments pressure which characterised the economy since 1982 worsened in 1985 as a result of increased debt service burden and accumulated trade arrears. The problem of unemployment worsened as fresh school leavers and more retrenched workers swelled the already saturated labour market. Furthermore, there was acute shortage of inputs necessary to sustain industrial production to a satisfactory level. So 1985 was just a little better off than the preceding four years.

But developments in the Economy in 1986 were mixed. The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was developed during the second half of the year and is expected to end in June 1988. The Gross Domestic Product at Constant 1977/78 factor cost declined in 1986 by 3.3 per cent. The decline in output reflected largely the poor performance of the manufacturing, crude petroleum, wholesale and retail trade sectors. In contrast, the value of agricultural output rose by 2.1% compared with an increase of 3.8% recorded in 1985, though the increase in 1986 was not sufficient to reverse the downturn in aggregate output.

#### ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC STRUCTURES FOR SELF-RELIANCE

The implementation of the strategies of self-reliance demands the articulation of alternative social structures - economic, political and cultural. This is because the transition from hopeless dependence and underdevelopment to self-reliant development is a fundamental restructuring of the priorities and processes, of national development.

Onimode [2] discussed some four alternative structures and procedures. One is national planning whose pre-occupation in Nigeria, before the current restructuring has been with the

growth of GDP, with rhetorical references to self-reliance. A new kind of planning is clearly required. The primary focus of such a plan should be matching national resources, basic needs, production and equitable distribution. The grandiose planning goals of the past seem, in fact, to have given way to more realistic and more modest efforts to meet sequential targets in concrete magnitude as evident in the 1988 budget.

Secondly, comprehensive survey and censuses will be required to generate accurate inventory of national population by different classifications, manpower stock, mineral, agricultural and other resources, basic needs (component and quantum per household), ownership and use of resources (including multinational activities), production technologies in different fields etc. This database is crucial for any attempt at matching domestic resources with priority needs, generating resources and technological surpluses and deficits and for equitable distribution. The muddling through approach of the past is incompatible with an effective self-reliant strategy.

Another alternative structure can be termed technological rationalisation. This is essential to the new national planning. It involves the technical job of matching resources with priority requirements and identifying the most feasible technologies consistent with this self-reliant posture. Technologists, engineers, pure and social scientists would be required to be involved in this structure. The technological process would be an evolving one but must start realistically and seriously. On the basis of this, priority projects can then be prepared in detail for plan execution.

The last of these structures, the one upon which the rest of this paper dwells, is the organisational input into this type of planning. Since it is planning at national, state, community (local) and enterprise levels, it requires the organisation of the people at all four levels.

This is because self-reliance must be based on the mass-majority in order to succeed and it requires mass participa-

tion. This is to ensure that the belt-tightening, social sacrifice and national defence which the strategy demands will be fully understood by all and offered in the best spirit of patriotic solidarity. This abhors the nation's past elitist approach to planning with its fragile organisational base. The new self-reliant planning has to be rooted deeply in the democratic mass organisation and co-operation of workers, peasants, youths, women etc.

### SOCIAL GROUPS OPERATING AS CO-OPERATIVES FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND SELF-RELIANCE

Voluntary organisations in which a collectivity of persons come together willingly for the purpose of working towards the enhancement of their living conditions are co-operatives.

Co-operative ideals were first propounded by the fathers of the movement, such as Robert Owen, Dr. William King, Charles Fourier, Saint Simon, Philippe Buchez, Louis Blanc, Charles Gide, Friedrich Faiffeisen, Schulze-Delitzsch, Georges Fauquet etc. These men were incensed by the evils of individualistic capitalism of their day and refused to accept mass poverty and social injustice as a necessity. They minutely analysed the capitalist system, identified its weaknesses and proposed the co-operative alternative. They set high ideals for the co-operative movement, such as: Self-help, Self-reliance; elimination of exploitative middlemen; equality; justice and equity in economic relations.

As pointed out at the beginning of this paper the challenge is how to mobilise the social group and popular organisation such that labour organisation can generate greater productivity, women organisation can contribute immensely to the social well being of the community and farmers' co-operatives can contribute to rapid agricultural development as the inevitable answer to the nation's unwholesome dependence on petroleum exports, and a means of promoting self-reliance and self-sufficiency in food production.

The co-operative movement consisting of social groups and popular organisations can be used to

- i. achieve increased domestic production of food, industrial raw materials and manufactured products;
- ii. contribute to the process of making decisions which affect the lives of the masses, meaning members of such organisations;
- iii. assist in instilling discipline and professional ethics for the different category of workers and members of the community

One of the major constraints to effective co-operative growth in Nigeria has been shown to be management related. Most managers of co-operatives tend to be unaware of what is expected of them. The objective of a co-operative manager should be the application of five management functions to co-operatives. These functions are: Planning, Organising, Directing, Co-ordinating and Controlling (PODCC).

When social groups such as labour organisation, women organisations, youth organisations, farmers, industrial workers unions etc. are organised into co-operative movements, their managers would come to realise that management functions in both the co-operatives and profit-oriented organisations are not dissimilar. The major differences are mainly observed in the methods of operations of the different set ups. For example, ultimate authority in the co-operative resides in the members not in the manager as the case is with a profit-oriented organisation.

The co-operative manager only applies the five management functions in a manner that would suit the desired and aspirations of members, not on the basis of either his personal conviction or judgement. Since most co-operative organisations are formed as a defensive weapon to correct some ills in the economic system (in this case, wrong attitude to work), low level of productivity, speculations leading to non-economic pricing and large scale unemployment, their management must be so effective and efficient that quick and decisive results may be attained. The co-operatives therefore would need strong leadership and fortitude to survive.

### PROPOSED OBJECTIVES FOR SELECTED SOCIAL GROUPS AND POPULAR ORGANISATIONS

The advantages of co-operatives include the fact that they can have the benefit of corporate firms and more. For example when a large number of people such as members of a social group join together to form a co-operative, the co-operators are usually liable only for debts of the organisation up to the amount of the money they have invested as shares. The members own and control the co-operative. Co-operatives operate on the basis of service at cost. This means that the emphasis is on maximum service to members.

In order to take on the challenge of applying the five management functions to the co-operatives which the paper is suggesting that social groups and popular organisations form, solid and appropriate goals and objectives must have been formulated by each category of co-operative. The objectives must have been formulated in the context of the overall national objectives. The assumption here also is that the co-operatives are being formed at the community level.

Taking cognisance of the procedures for formulating and registering co-operatives as are available in the literature, the five basic management functions as enumerated in this paper, in an attempt to prevent the reoccurrence of the management problems which typically afflicted co-operatives in Nigeria in the past, the paper now attempts to suggest what the goals of social groups and popular organisations should be. Four organisations are focused on to represent the social group and popular organisations which are:

- i. Labour organisations
- ii. Women organisations
- iii. Farmers Associations
- iv. Youths organisation

These groups are by no means mutually exclusive.

### LABOUR ORGANISATIONS

Workers' Co-operative should start from the point of identifying the needs of its members. The objectives of such a co-operative then should include

- a. Supply of these basic needs. That is, well thought-out methods of supplying the basic needs of workers should then be examined. Proposals should be made to authorities most likely to provide needs which are out of the reach of members, on how these needs could best be provided. While procedures and targets are set for the supply of those needs that are within the reach of the Co-operative. A good example of this is arrangement to buy consumer goods for workers directly from source, avoiding middlemen and reducing inflationary tendency.
- b. Motivating the workers. workers' Co-operative may want to work with employers of ways and means of motivating its members. The provision of environment conducive to job performance, for example, could be provided by employers and maintained by workers themselves. When workers are highly motivated then other objectives may be easily achieved.
- c. In order to increase the productivity level of workers, it will be necessary to instil the sense of responsibility, of achievement and of enjoying rest after labour amongst others into workers.
- d. In order to ensure that there is a direct linkage between education and employment, the workers' Co-operative must be interested in the appropriateness of technology, training and educational curriculum in the training and educational institutions in Nigeria to the labour market. Skills available should be appropriate for the nation's rural development. The successful implementation and full participation of this co-operative where necessary, of the 6-3-3-4 system of education will help make the Nigerian graduates job-creators rather than job-seekers.
- e. Providing placement services and
- f. Human relations negotiations

## WOMEN ORGANISATIONS

In recent time, women of different educational and cultural background have formed themselves into societies, associations and clubs for different objectives. For instance, there are women associations for the promotion of religious beliefs; the care of motherless and abandoned children; the care of destitutes, etc. The importance of women to social and economic development of any society cannot be over-emphasised. For example, the National Council of Women Societies in Nigeria is a federation of hundreds of women societies throughout the country. Its aim is to assist women in both urban and rural areas in the important role as home makers and nation-builders. The position of this paper along this line, is that these women organisations should harness their resources, join their efforts together in forming co-operatives. This way, they can be effective and functional and become professional. The paper is not against the formation of co-operatives in the urban centres but emphasis should be in the rural areas, operating from the local government area to reach higher and primary production areas. The co-operatives in the urban centres may have to lend a helping hand now and again to the sister co-operatives in the rural areas in order that the overall objectives of the women co-operatives may be achieved. These objectives should run from identification of felt-needs down to execution and evaluation of projects.

A major pre-occupation of women co-operatives should be the development of the supply and distribution of appropriate technologies for the Nigerian rural women.

How Appropriate Technology can help Women:

There are basically three important ways in which appropriate or 'intermediate' technology can help women. These are:

- a. Labour-saving devices to cut down the time and effort spent on non-productive tasks such as carrying water and fuel and pounding grains.

- b. Equipment to assist women in income-generating activities such as weaving, soap-making and food processing; and
- c. Devices to help women make the home environment healthier and more comfortable. These include scap pits, toilets, wash-stands and food containers. Some of these may even be existing, for example food containers, but they are not at the reach of these group of women.

African women have at international conferences and workshops identified several areas in which appropriate technologies could make a significant difference to the lives of the rural women. This paper holds that the following areas already identified should be considered for development:

1. For the Labour-Saving Device
  - a. Provision of water supplies in rural areas.
  - b. Introduction of light transport facilities for the portage of water, wood, farm produce and other loads.
  - c. Adoption of efficient agricultural tools; (these do not have to be complex and sophisticated).
  - d. Introduction of grinding mills and other crop processing equipment.
2. For income-generating activities, three important factors have to be taken into consideration:
  - a. In some cases the women may have no idea of what possibilities exist in respect of utilising locally available resources so as to earn income. This suggests that there is the need to carry out careful studies of local resources, of available equipment and of market possibilities and to make this information available to women.
  - b. In some cases, the women may be aware of a potential way of earning extra income but they have no idea how to acquire

the necessary equipment and may not be able to gain success to a loan which would enable them buy such equipment.

- c. The women should therefore organise themselves and their existing associations into operative units, such as the co-operatives.
3. For Home improvements; Technologies which aim simply at improving the home environment are rarely greeted with the same enthusiasm as those which save labour or help to increase income.

The majority of technologies in this category relate to hygiene and cleanliness, which are, of course, extremely important for the health and well-being of the family.

#### FARMERS CO-OPERATIVES

There is a definite relationship between agricultural productivity and the level of per capita incomes, the levels of nutrition, and the general welfare of the population; the supply of basic food both for farm and non-farm families depends on the efficiency of the subsistence sector of agriculture. It is now widely recognised, following the nation's various crisis of financial management both at home and abroad that rapid agricultural development is the inevitable answer to the nation's unwholesome dependence on petroleum export and a means of promoting self-reliance and self sufficiency in food production and raw materials. The present administration has in the past two years given the right emphasis to food production and agriculture.

While the government is mounting its food production programmes it is only pertinent that farmers be mobilised to wards higher agricultural productivity, increased participation in agricultural research, dissemination of research findings, efficient application of herbicides, insecticides and fungicides, the processing of agricultural produce and provision and use of storage facilities. All of the above should be included in the objectives of the farmers co-operatives. These co-operatives would have

to work with the other institutions in the economy, such as, the financial institutions, Ministry of Agriculture, Research Centres and manufactures of farm tools, in order to achieve its goals.

The co-operative form of organisation is not new to the agricultural sector of Nigeria. Agricultural co-operative development in Nigeria has passed through a slow but significant organisational transition. Its conception was predicated on the realisation of the vast and diverse problems bewitching agricultural co-operatives in terms of production and management. Notably, the early stage of agricultural co-operatives in Nigeria typified the merchantile type which was specifically "service co-operatives." They were principally established to promote the economy of the individual farmer by taking over the functions of the agricultural producer in his capacity as an entrepreneur.

These functions are normally confined to the areas of credit, marketing and supply. The above feature was common to agricultural co-operatives in all the states of the Federation. At that early stage, the Agric. Coop Society acted as a multi-purpose organisation without concerning itself with the agricultural production and other interrelated functions of the individual farmer and his family. More emphasis was laid on the distributive concept thereby ignoring the need to promote agricultural production as the basic concern of Co-operatives.

There should be a properly integrated approach for intensive agricultural co-operative development aimed principally as ensuring full participation in increased food production, storage, marketing and processing. Co-operative method of organisation can enhance the productivity and living standards of farmers in the following ways:

- a. by encouraging the adoption of innovations by farmers. In order to modernise and improve the peasant agriculture, it is essential that modern technologies be adopted and utilised. Co-operatives can be used to encourage farmers to adopt improved technologies through facilitating their access to financial resources.



- b. by providing farmers with credit and other facilities necessary for the adoption of these innovations;
- c. by improving the competitive power of the farmers vis-a-vis their actual and potential exploiters such as the middlemen, money lenders etc.

### YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

Youths organisations and clubs, such as the Boys Scout; Girls' Guide, Boys Brigade, Youth Corpers etc. have a role to play in the nation's move towards self sufficiency and economic recovery. The youths of Nigeria need to be more organised and better disciplined for the task ahead of them. The creation of a social mobilisation Corps (or MAMSER BRIGADE) as proposed by the Directorate of Social Mobilisation and as approved by the Federal Government is a step in the right direction.

### CONCLUSIONS

In the context of economic development, this paper suggests a unified approach. The unified approach in the form of co-operatives at the community level stresses inclusion of all the necessary inputs - not only quantities of capital, labour, and resources, but also inputs such as research, education and nutrition. The latter will improve the quality of both physical and human resources at each stage of the process resulting in a robust development system with all desired interactions. The basic model (of development) is needed, supposedly, for very poor countries; the unified approach comes into the picture when a country is ready for and wants, structural changes. Nigeria can be said to be ripe for the unified approach.

The emphasis in the paper has been on mobilising social groups and popular organisation through co-operatives, where possible, at the community level. Co-operatives are essentially democratic and participatory institutions which can easily provide a platform for teaching the peasants the art of democracy, the value of self-help, the inherent superiority of mobilising their own collective efforts and resources for solving their own problems, and the value

of the egalitarian and democratic sharing of benefits. Co-operatives help to eliminate the subjugation of the workers to the exploitation of some employers; that of the women to various discriminatory societal values and policies and that of the farmers to exploitative middlemen and money lenders.

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