TOWARDS A GREEN AND RESILIENT RECOVERY IN NIGERIA

Authors:
Chukwumerije Okereke, Ogheneruona E. Diemuodeke, Ernest N. Acheampong, Henry, Otchwemah, and Gboyega A. Olorunfemi
Introduction

Nigeria recorded its first Covid-19 case on the 27th February 2020 in Lagos State and as at 1st March, 2021, the number of confirmed Cases has risen to 156,017 with number of survivors standing at 133,904 and 1,915 deaths recorded over the period under reference\(^1\). As a key regional player in West Africa, Nigeria accounts for about half of West Africa’s population, with approximately 202 million people and one of the largest populations of youth in the world. Within the shortest hit of the virus in 2020, the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reported 6.1% contraption in the Nations economy year on year in the second quarter of 2020\(^2\). An economic dip reported by the World Economic Forum as the Nigeria’s steepest in the last 10 years\(^3\). Following wide practice around the world, Nigeria has designed and deployed economic stimulus measures to assist in cushioning the effects of the Covid-19. However, the national road map should incorporate the country’s peculiarities and not the global ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach. The Nigerian national economy is mainly driven by Agriculture, Transportation, Telecommunications, Manufacturing, Wetlands, Energy, and Oil and Gas. Largely, the economy is tied to the oil and gas sector, with profits from this sector, contributing a whopping 86 % of the country’s export revenue\(^4\). The next session of this policy brief will address the major challenges to green recovery and will be followed by comprehensive recommendation on how they could be addressed by the Nigerian government.

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\(^1\) https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng/
Challenges

It is desirable to recover the Nigerian economy from the Covid-19 socio-economic shocks without exacerbating GHG emission and its climate change impacts. To this end, some challenges to the green recovery are outlined as follows.

**Energy Shortage/Inefficiency**

Despite the numerous policies and regulations in place for power in Nigeria, energy shortage has remained a perennial challenge - the present grid is weak and requires expansion, modernisation, and digitisation. Sadly, despite producing and supplying energy far below demand, plenty of energy in Nigeria is wasted.

**Climate Change Impact on Agriculture**

Nigeria is exposed to a range of climate conditions and extreme weather events ranging from flooding in low-lying areas like the Niger Delta in the south to drought in the north with significant implications on the national food security and well-being of the people leading to land resources loss, low agricultural productivity, food scarcity, economic hardship, and fuelling herders-farmers violence across Nigeria.

**Transportation Challenge**

The transportation sector is one of the major consumers of fossil fuel, with this sector contributing 28.4% of total emissions in 2016. The Nigerian transport sector is highly dependent on high carbon intensity fuels (mainly gasoline and diesel), which does not support green recovery. There are gaps in policy and regulatory frameworks at the national, regional and local level that need to be reviewed.

**Failing Standard of Building and Infrastructure**

Lack of climate decision support tools into components of design, construction, control, and operation of public infrastructure and negligence of building codes have lead to many collapsed buildings in major cities of Nigeria. Many energy-intensive materials are still being used in construction. New construction and development do not meet sustainable criteria and energy efficiency target.

**Loss of Forest and Vegetation Cover Through Illegal Logging**

Although there is evidence of huge dependence on fuelwood in Nigeria, there is also evidence of illegal logging activities and encroachment of reserved area with no enforcement to prosecute the perpetrators. Many economic trees have now been threatened. Globally, Nigeria is the third-largest producer of bioenergy after China and India, respectively, yet, a whopping 80% of the population still depend on charcoal and fuelwood for their energy needs, especially at the household level.

**Solid Waste Management**

Waste generation and mismanagement in Nigeria is at an unprecedented level with visible consequences on health, good water, and the environment amongst others. The rise in the use of Personal Protective Equipments (PPEs) and the production of face masks in different brand during the Covid-19 pandemic has led to an increase in plastic and medical wastes with not enough facilities in place to manage them.

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6. World Energy Council (WEC), 2013
Digital Economy

Covid-19 expanded the existing inequality as the underserved in the vulnerable communities were not reached thus cutting them off socio-economic activities during the lockdown with no access to e-learning and e-commerce platforms for students and families to receive lessons and carry out financial transactions, respectively.

Gas Flaring

Gas flaring contributes nearly 55 million tonnes of CO2 in Nigeria per annum and represents the biggest single source of pollution and CO2 emission. Nigeria has been so hard hit by Covid-19 because of its sole concentration on oils and gas as several past warnings to diversify its economy were ignored.

Policy Coherence

Many stakeholders still work in silos and this has contributed to non-action, implementations and enforcement of policies thus creating setbacks when there could have been progress.

Unemployment and Socio-Economic Recession

The pandemic has been linked to increased youth unemployment, high cost of living, corruption and youth restiveness as being experienced. For Nigeria, the Covid-19 pandemic was identified as the major driver of the decline in the price of crude oil, borrowers inability to service their loans and shocks in the global supply chain.

Recommendations For Green Recovery and Advocacy

Green Energy Development

Green energy is an obvious frontline candidate for green recovery in Nigeria - a key advocacy point is that COVID-19 presents an opportunity to combine climate action with the effort to solve our perennial energy problem by scaling up the effort to generate both on-grid and off-grid electricity through modern renewable sources like solar, wind, tidal and geothermal sources by 1) Pursuing Community-based innovation programmes, 2) Establish a Green Energy Research and Development Board and 3) Implement Hybrid-Minigrid Support Programme.

Energy Efficiency Campaign

Energy efficiency plays important roles in emission reduction in all sectors. The technology responses would be to use energy-efficient conversion systems and Grade A and B energy performance certified appliances. Nigeria will achieve this through 1) Legislation of Efficiency Target, 2) Conservation of electricity rate, 3) Set Energy efficiency appliance standard, 4) Increase Residential smart meter programme and 5) Waste-To-Energy Policy.

Climate-Smart Agriculture
To mitigate the impact of climate change with potential danger to food security, employment and livelihood to millions in Nigeria; our specific recommendations will include the promotion of agroecology, mechanization, boosting the storage capacity of agro-based products with renewable-energy, and ramping up the refrigeration capacity of perishable agro products through the following key actions: 1) Embracing organic farming, 2) Promoting green storage infrastructure and 3) Climate change data management. This will enable Nigeria to increase food availability by up to 49%, reduce GHG emissions by up to 15%, reduce the cost of agro-foods by up to 35% and increase farmers income by up to 28%.

Green Transportation
The green transportation recommendation for green recovery could be actioned by the following specific strategies: 1) Greening public transit fleets, 2) Promoting greening transportation, 3) Establish National planning for transit and 4) Institute National green driving programme. These provide huge potential to reduce emission by up to 15% and create over 10 million jobs across the country by 2025.

Augument Building & Infrastructure for Green Recovery
Aside from building 300,000 homes in the bouncing back initiative of the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN)8, proper town and country planning, with regular inspections of buildings construction should be strengthened. Nigeria will achieve this through 1) Green building and infrastructure policy, 2) Innovation drive for green building and infrastructure 3) Integrated resilience infrastructure and 4) Less energy-intensive infrastructure programme.

Increase Forest & Vegetation Cover
The key actions that would support this recommendation are 1) Forest and forestry modernisation campaign - promote utilization of forest biomass for new and existing products in a sustainable fashion to support afforestation, carbon capture and sequestration. 2) One child, three trees advocacy. The government should embark on massive advocacy to plant economic trees with a high capacity for carbon sink.

Waste Reduction, Re-Use, Recycle and Reclaim for Energy
The key actions that would support this recommendation include: 1) Promote the use of recyclable materials, 2) Initiate Waste Reduction and Recycle Fund: 3) Waste Reduction, Reuse, Recycle and Reclaim Programme 4) Solid Waste-To-Energy: The country can generate over 5,000 MW, employ over 200,000 graduates, reduce waste generation by 30% and targets 40% and 60% recycling rates by 2025 and 2030.

Fast-Track Digital Economy
Digital economy: e-commerce, e-health, e-learning, e-banking, and video conferencing technologies aided most of the developed nations largely during the Covid-19 lockdown. Nigeria should aggressively support the development of high-speed internet and mobile services to allow rural and peri-urban dwellers to effectively do their businesses at or closer to home thereby reducing emission. The rural digital infrastructure, if executed will stimulate the growth of green jobs and promote economic development.

Stop Gas Flaring and Diversify the Economy
Nigeria must seek to diversify its economy away from over-reliance on oil and invest in technologies of the future. Convert huge volume of gas that is flared and which contributes to about 49 million tonnes of CO2 annually to LPG that can be used for cooking to help solve the problem of household energy poverty through 1) Fuel Switching Programme, 2) Nationwide Clean Cooking Campaign, and 3) Gas-To-Wire Policy. These can create over 35,000 employment in the supply chain, increase modern energy access and a 15% reduction in GHGs from gas flaring.

Stakeholder Mapping Of Green Recovery Advocacy Initiatives
To achieve a successful Green Economy recovery requires the collaborative efforts of several stakeholders: government, industry practitioners, education, non-governmental organisations, and the general public to drive coherence, consensus and collective action with many projects at different stages of development.

Conclusion

Despite its raging effect on the socio-economic status of nations and the world, COVID-19 could represent a rare opportunity to reshape the national and global economy to be more sustainable and resilient by incorporating climate action into the policies and measures to reboot the economy. It also provides the platform to engage people in brainstorming on what kind of growth is sustainable, and the importance of making human, society and the planet’s well-being a central part of the countries’ policies and institutions. With Nigeria being an oil-producing and oil-dependent economy, it is most likely that the drive to meet the post-Covid-19 pandemic would be fossil fuel-fired energy systems, which will aggravate GHG emissions and its climate change impacts and negatively impact the Nigeria NDCs as shown in the figure below. To this end, there is an urgent need to recover the economy on green energy paths. To transition to a green economy, it has been advocated that the Nigerian economy should embrace a co-generation and self-generation of solar, biomass and wind energy. Furthermore, Nigeria must have to build its technology base to combat the surging needs for technology. Again, the national road map should incorporate the country’s peculiarities and not the global ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach.