

Rhetoric vs. Reality: A Critical Assessment of Nigeria's Development Planning Culture

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Abstract- The study examines the implementation of development plans against their stated objectives in Nigeria. The study reviews four development plans from 2003 to 2021, namely: National Economic Empowerment Program (NEEDS) 2003 – 2007, The Transformation Agenda (TA) 2011 – 2015, Economic Recovery Growth Program (ERGP) 2017 – 2020, and The National Development (ND) 2021 – 2025. Both quantitative and qualitative data were employed. Quantitative data from secondary sources were analysed using trend analysis, while qualitative data from secondary sources were examined through content analysis. The study reveals that the development plans did not meet their stated objectives because they were treated as ends in themselves rather than as tools to achieve broader goals. Additional reasons for failure included setting unrealistic targets, institutional weaknesses, widespread corruption, and prioritizing economic growth over holistic development, which paradoxically resulted in greater destitution. The study recommends that policymakers should target critical sectors, such as energy, manufacturing, security, and corruption, for maximum development impact. They should also adopt the bottom-up development strategy, make human capital development the foundation for sustained and inclusive growth. Focus on industrialization and SME support, not temporary welfare, to reduce poverty. Ensure accountability by penalizing those who undermine development efforts.

I. INTRODUCTION

Governments are responsible for fostering economic development, providing public goods, creating an enabling environment for enterprises, and making key macroeconomic decisions that impact the lives of their citizens. These are achieved through a blueprint designed to serve as a roadmap towards meeting the desired development objectives. As rightly put by Udofa and Ekeuwei (2023) that development in any clime is not achieved in isolation. There must be strategic steps taken to achieve it in its proper sense. Development plans provide a framework for strategic resource allocation through economic growth, infrastructure development, employment creation, poverty reduction, a good education and healthcare

system, improving the balance of payments, and enhancing the general standard of living of citizens.

In modern history, the importance of development plans for achieving medium- and long-term economic growth became evident with the Soviet Union's accomplishments in the 1920s. According to Agarwala (1983), up to 1960, many countries were impressed with the apparent success of the Soviet Union's five-year plans initiated in the late 1920s. It was widely believed that the plans helped in the massive and successful industrialization of the USSR--industrialization that enabled it to survive Hitler's onslaughts and become a superpower in the postwar period. Therefore, development planning is necessary because since development is neither accidental nor does it take place naturally and quickly of its own accord, it is expedient to plan it deliberately. Nations cannot afford to be stagnant; the essentials of transformation therefore become the most critical element of basically attempting to shift from the deeper orientation of persons, organizations or society (Kwon-Ndung et al., 2022).

Hence, Nigeria, having great potential but lagging behind in the structural transformation necessary to fall in the league of developed nations, embarked on these development plans. Six development plans were adopted from 2003 to 2021 with four of them being the focal interest of this study, namely: National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) 2003-2007; according to the document, NEEDS is the first Nigerian development plan that integrates economic development efforts at the federal and state levels. It does not confine itself to specific sectors or limit itself to addressing only the major challenges identified. Instead, it looks at the big picture, examining how the challenges identified in each sector affect one another (NEEDS, 2004). NEEDS focuses on four key strategies: reorienting values, reducing poverty, creating wealth, and generating employment (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2004).

Secondly, the country had the Transformation Agenda (TA) 2011-2015; the document outlines objectives across multiple sectors, including macroeconomic policy, governance reform, poverty reduction, the judiciary, and foreign policy. For the period 2011–2015, the Macroeconomic Framework and Economic Direction section assumes a baseline GDP growth rate of 11.7 percent per annum. Governance policies and programs from 2011 to 2015 target public service improvements, security, law and order, legislative development, anti-corruption measures and institutions, judicial reform, economic coordination, and support for private investment. The document also addresses Human Capital Development and Real Sector Policies, Programs, and Projects (National Planning Commission, 2011).

Thirdly, the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) 2017-2020; a Medium-Term Plan for 2017-2020, build on the Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) for the 2016 Budget of Change and was developed to restore economic growth while leveraging the ingenuity and resilience of the Nigerian people, the nation's most priceless assets. It is also articulated with the understanding that the role of government in the 21st century must evolve from that of being an omnibus provider of citizens' needs into a force for eliminating the bottlenecks that impede innovation and market-based solutions (Bello & Neba, 2022). The ERGP was based on 3 strategic objectives supported by enablers and a clear delivery plan. The inclusive growth plan involved promoting national prosperity by ensuring that the following measures were put in place; restoring growth, investing in the Nigerian people, building a globally competitive economy (Otinche, 2018).

And finally, the current National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2025; Nigeria's National Development Plan (NDP), 2021 – 2015 is a medium-term blueprint designed to unlock the country's potentials in all sectors of the economy for a sustainable, holistic and inclusive national development, developed by the different facet of the Private Sector, Sub-national Government, Civil Society Organization (CSO) and facilitated by the Federal Government of Nigeria.

The NDP 2021-2025, adopted an integrated and multi-sectoral development approach. The approach recognises the multi-faceted and interlinked nature of sustainable development, which calls for

interventions to be tackled simultaneously through a coordinated approach to implementing development programmes. According to the document, by 2025, the effective implementation of the Plan is expected to achieve average economic growth of 4.6 percent. Cumulatively it would have lifted 35 million people out of poverty and created 21 million full-time jobs which will set the stage for achieving the government's target of lifting 100 million Nigerians out of poverty in 10 years under the National Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (NPRGS). It would have also raised revenue to GDP ratio to 15 percent as well as improve health and education of the population (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, 2021).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Nigeria has been seeking structural economic transformation, leading to the formulation of numerous development plans since its independence. Despite the introduction of these plans, the problems that called for the formulation of these development plans still persists. The persistent gap between policy formulation and observable results indicates a recurring issue with policy implementation, resulting in these development documents being viewed by many as slogans rather than real structural transformation pursuit.

Planning is too often regarded, even today, as little more than the act of preparing a multi-year document called a plan. When this approach is adopted, the plan becomes an end in itself rather than a means to achieving development; it is usually not operationally oriented, and little effort is made to implement it. The process of keeping the plan up to date while implementing it shows how indistinguishable plan preparation is from plan implementation and therefore how unrewarding it is to keep them in separate compartments. It is against this background that the study investigates Nigeria's development plan culture by looking at the disparity between rhetoric and actual implementation over the past two decades.

Persistent underdevelopment in recent years prompts several critical questions regarding Nigeria's development trajectory:

Have the objectives of these plans been achieved with persistent problems coming from different challenges?

Are the set-up goals of these development plans unrealistic from the onset?

Another area of inquiry is the compatibility of these development plans with national ambitions, and whether significant gaps exist between current policy design and optimal policy frameworks.

If failures exist, how are they inhibiting the country's growth and development?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review comprises three interconnected sections: conceptual literature, theoretical literature, and empirical literature.

2.1 Conceptual Reviews

2.1.1 Development

There are many forms of development, political, social, economic etc. For the purpose of this study, we are going to look at economic development. Pazos (1953) defined development as an increase in the productive capacity and production of a country at a rate higher than the increase in its population. Economic Development Association (EDA), (2025) asserts that development creates the conditions for economic growth and improved quality of life by expanding the capacity of individuals, firms, and communities to maximize the use of their talents and skills to support innovation, lower transaction costs, and responsibly produce and trade valuable goods and services.

2.1.2 Planning

Cacho (1975) defines planning as a continuous process in which government plays a management role in mobilizing the society and collaborating with it in a complex assortment of activities based on the plan and geared to attaining its objectives. He however, differentiates between annual and rolling plan where he asserted that both conceptually and in practice there is little difference between annual planning and rolling planning. The notable difference between the two is that annual planning (for a fixed, long-term period) takes a pause every five years or so for a thorough review and the preparation of another multi-year plan, while rolling planning (also for a long-term period) involves review on an annual basis. Jhingan (2011) defines economic planning as a deliberate control and direction of the economy by a central authority for the purpose of achieving definite targets and objectives within a specified period of

time. This means that there has to be a vision, mission, targets and timing periods for a definite plan to be actualized.

2.1.3 Development Plan

Maketho (2020) alludes that Development planning comprehensively refers to predetermining a nation's vision, mission, policies and programs in all facets of life such as social, human, political, environmental, economic and technological factors as well as a means to achieve them.

Datta (2010) development planning involves processes which ensure that national policies and strategies are realized and development concerns at all levels are fully integrated into the overall national development thrusts.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study adopts the policy implementation theory of Sabatier and Mazmanian (1983). The theory was adopted due to the observation that, although development plans in Nigeria are thoroughly formulated and designed, their implementation often fails to achieve the intended outcomes. The Implementation Theory emphasizes that well-designed and carefully drafted development plans do not necessarily guarantee successful implementation. Teddy et al. (2019) articulates this very well, stating that the difference between 'policy as promised' and 'policy as practiced' can be attributed to implementation gaps. Leslie Pal (2014) asserts that the chances of successful implementation, which Sabatier and Mazmanian define as "the translation of statutory objectives into the policy decisions of implementing agencies," are maximized if there are clear objectives, sympathetic agencies, authority, resources, fidelity to statute and rules, leadership, and public support – such a daunting list illustrates why the study of implementation appears to be the dismal science of policy analysis. Prior studies focus on providing solutions that are generic; this study tends to be specific-centred and recommends workable solutions to the problems identified.

2.3 Empirical Literature

A study by Asabe Shehu Yar'adua Foundation (2020) relying on valuable secondary sources of data found that development planning in Nigeria has over the

years been constrained by the failure of the Nigerian leadership to properly envision true development and place same on the agenda, further argued that sundry factors like misplacement of priorities, poor plan discipline, lack of supervision, ineffective executive capacity and public sector inefficiency, technology transfer syndrome, system corruption and inefficacious public/private partnership have made a genuine development path somewhat illusory.

Working in silo and gate-keeping in the formulation and execution of these development plans could hinder successful implementation as reported by Yunusa (2023) who adopted a desk research method; thus, data were sourced exclusively from secondary sources. A search through the major literatures on development planning in Nigeria revealed that eleven thematic issues constitute the constraints and challenges of development planning in Nigeria. The study found that of all the constraints and challenges to planning in Nigeria, 'Dictatorship of Planning' is the most serious challenge to planning, which previous studies are yet to identify as a challenge. The study thus recommended the 'Decentralization and Democratization of Planning' in Nigeria, among other recommendations.

Aderemi (2013) assessed NEEDS implementation in the education sector using a sector-specific, before-and-after approach. He compared educational performance indicators before and during the programme. The findings revealed improved performance of educational indicators such as female enrolment in primary schools, adult literacy rate, primary school completion rate, and Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations during the NEEDS programme, although achievements were modest. Budgetary allocation to the sector as a proportion to the sector as a proportion of total budget was below 10 per cent and less than the 25 percent UNESCO recommendation. Funding to this sector should be increased and monitored in order to achieve sustainable improvements in educational outcomes. The paper therefore suggests the extension of the universal basic education scheme to the senior secondary level to reduce drop-out rates.

On a positive note, Unongo et al. (2019) conclude that National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy has impacted positively to some extent in some rural areas in Nigeria but has not made significant positive impact to some extent in some rural areas in Nigeria therefore, poverty remain

at alarming rate and people in rural areas are still locked in vicious circle of poverty. It recommended that: majority of the people in the rural areas should be accessed education to be more enlightened to embrace developmental programmes; leadership at all cadres should be truly committed to the agricultural and economic reform agenda; ensure improved health care among the rural people; programmes should be generated and designed within the country to cover all rural areas rather than foreign based to prevent the shock from financial and human resources withdrawal experienced from foreign donor agencies.

Similarly, Alao and Alao-Owunna (2013) found that the Transformation Agenda had impacted positively on each sector of the agenda but the effect was not significant enough to overcome the challenges of poverty, unemployment, security and industrialization. The study further found that the challenges that are hindering the successful achievement of the Transformation Agenda's objectives include but not limited to corruption, poor governance, inconsistency in policy formulation and implementation. The study concludes that with good leadership and genuine commitment to the goals, the target could be attained as Nigeria is blessed with ample natural and human resources.

Nwogbaga (2017) findings revealed challenges such as increasing unemployment rates and lack of significant success in poverty alleviation programs, highlighting the need for a reevaluation of strategies towards achieving developmental goals.

Absence of consistency in the implementation process of these plans could hinder any progress as viewed by Anam et al. (2023), using secondary data sources analyzed through content analysis. The study identified the challenges to include a lack of policy continuity, weak institutions and corporate governance, and inadequate funding of policy goals, among other things. By implication, the contributions of the policies to national development have not been significant. The paper advocates the need for the present administration to support the goals of the National Development Plan, by funding the policy goals and strengthening the administrative framework of the bureaucracy for effective performance and sustainability.

Some scholars argue that the successful execution of these plans may not produce the desired result, as highlighted by Bello and Neba (2022). Using data generated from secondary sources, the study revealed that, although the ERGP was implemented properly, its expected positive impact on GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growth, reduction in inflation, and unemployment is not satisfactory. Accordingly, restructuring of the economy through diversification needs to be seriously sustained in Nigeria.

Udofa and Ekeuwei(2023) found unorganized vision and plans, corruption, poor funding, ineffective tax administration system and poor plan implementation, and evaluation limit the success of development strategies in African countries. It was recommended that special funds for development plans should be independent of the general budget and agencies of implementation and evaluation should be created for any development plan or programme.

In comprehensive research, Abasilim et al. (2025) found that Nigeria's NDPs have consistently faced several challenges, including corruption, weak institutional capacity, political instability, limited private sector involvement, and insufficient inclusivity. To improve the implementation and impact of Nigeria's NDPs, the study recommends strengthening anti-corruption measures, enhancing institutional capacity, promoting policy continuity, increasing private sector participation, and improving inclusivity in the planning processes.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Both quantitative and qualitative data were employed. Trend analysis was used to analyse

macroeconomic indicators data obtained from secondary sources. While content analysis was used to analyse qualitative data obtained from secondary sources. These sources comprise of macroeconomic indicators for the period under review, official development plans, archival materials, expert opinions, scholarly publications, government reports, National Development Plans, reports from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), assessments by the World Bank. This methodological approach facilitates a comprehensive examination of both the content of development plans and the practical realities of their implementation.

IV. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The key objectives of the development plans are evaluated in relation to their implementation during the review period to assess the overall effectiveness of both the objectives and the achievements of the development plans.

4.1 National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) 2003-2007

The main objectives of Nigeria's National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) 2003 were to achieve sustainable poverty reduction, employment generation, wealth creation, and value reorientation by reforming government and institutions, growing the private sector, implementing a social charter for the people, and fostering an enduring value system. The table below provides macroeconomic indicators to measure implementation progress.

Table 1

Date	Per Capita Income(\$)	Unemployment (%)	Poverty Rate (%)	Corruption Ranking
2003	763.39	14.80	48.4%	132
2004	962.48	13.40	54.4%	144
2005	1211.38	11.90	57%	152
2006	1599.54	13.70	65.5%	142
2007	1815.53	14.60	54.4%	147

Sources:

Per Capita: *World Bank Data (2025)*

Poverty Rate: *United Nations Commission for Africa by Kasirim (2006)*

Action Against Hunger

Corruption Ranking: *Trading Economics (2025)*

Total Unemployment: *Nkechi and Lawrence (2016)*.

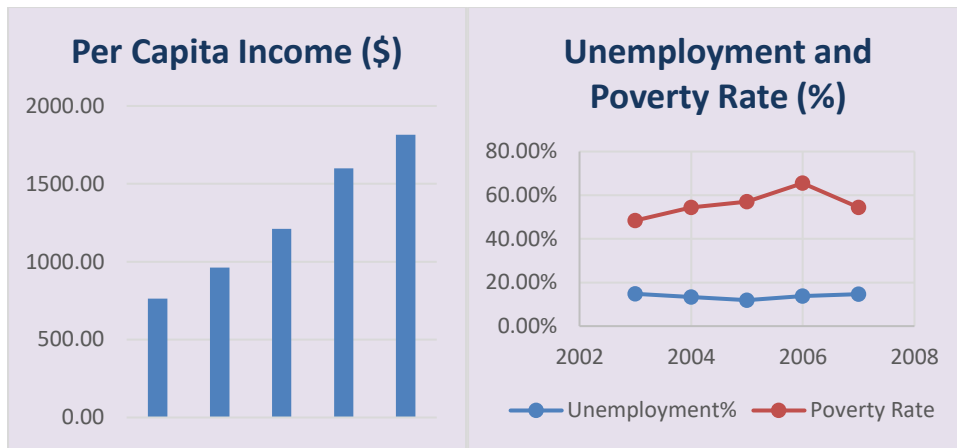


Figure 1

Source: Authors' Computation

Figure 2

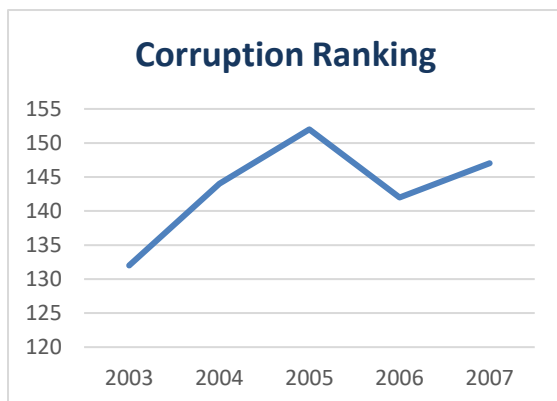
Source: Authors' Computation

Table 1 shows a steady increase in Nigeria's GDP per capita from 2003 to 2007, suggesting economic growth. However, both unemployment and poverty rates did not improve. Total unemployment stood at 14.8% when the plan began in 2003 and only marginally decreased to 14.6% by the end of the plan. Similarly, the poverty rate rose from 48.4% in 2003 to 54.4% in 2007, indicating a worsening situation.

Figure 3

Source: Authors' Computation

On corruption, Nigeria was ranked 132nd in 2003 among 133 countries, and 147th in 2007 among 179 countries. This shows a slight improvement that is not significant enough to indicate substantial changes in the effectiveness or quality of the country's administrative structures, policies, or governance processes over 5 years.



4.2 The Transformation Agenda (TA) 2011-2015

The Plan outlined objectives across multiple sectors, including macroeconomic policy, governance reform, employment generation, poverty reduction, human capital development, the judiciary, and foreign policy.

Table 2

Date	GDP	Exchange	Inflation	Unemployment
2011	4.14467E+11	153.86	10.83	8.18
2012	4.63971E+11	157.50	12.22	8.14
2013	5.20117E+11	157.31	8.50	7.98
2014	5.74184E+11	158.55	8.05	8.35
2015	4.93027E+11	192.44	9.01	8.75

Source:

World Bank Open Data

Trading Economics

Table 2 shows that GDP grew steadily from 2011 until 2015. In 2015, it dropped significantly. The exchange rate was stable from 2011 to 2014, but it sharply depreciated in 2015. Inflation peaked in

2012, then returned to single digits from 2013 to 2015. It increased to 9% in 2015 from 8.1% in 2014. Surprisingly, youth unemployment remained the same from 2011 to 2015.

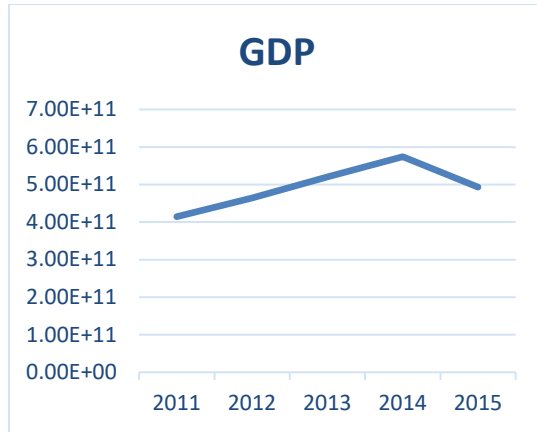


Figure 4, Source: Authors' Computation

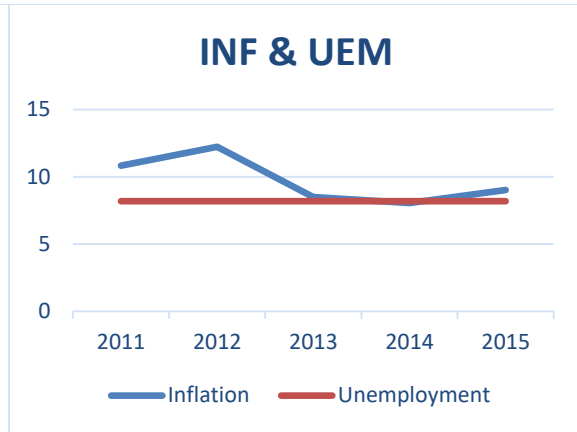


Figure 5, Source: Authors' Computation

It can also be seen from Figures 4 and 5 that both GDP and inflation increased until 2015, after which they both began to decline. A similar trend is visible for the exchange rate in Figure 6. This pattern may be associated with the oil boom of 2011-2014, rather than the impacts of policy implementation under the Transformation Agenda. Corruption also followed this trend. Surprisingly, despite the oil boom, the unemployment chart remained flat during this period, suggesting stagnation in employment generation.

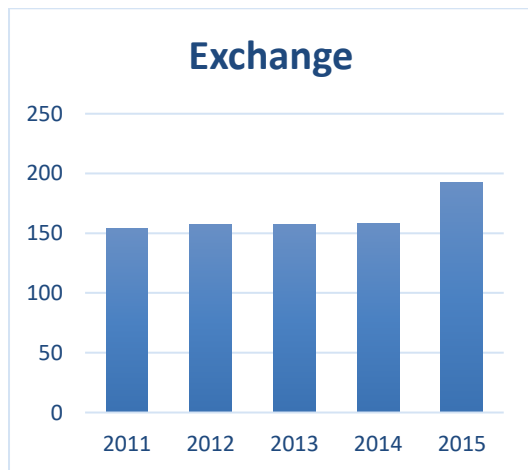


Figure 6

Source: Authors' Computation

Among the key objectives of the 5-year plan was institutional reforms that will create a working system which enables development. This included,

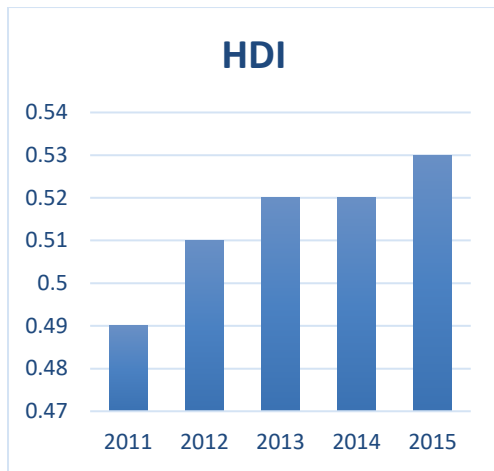
judiciary reforms that ensures rule of law, good international relations with other nations to attracts foreign direct investment into the country, and the fight against corruption.

During the period, the Nigerian government suffered huge reputational damage from the arm smuggling case in South Africa in 2014, where \$9.3 million cash loaded in several suitcases was seized to the president missing speaking slot at AU meeting in Addis Ababa.

Between 2011 and 2015, the judiciary was marred by numerous scandals, resulting in several arrests during President Buhari's administration. EFCC investigations involving former Attorney General Adoke, Etete, and others uncovered offenses including conspiracy, forgery of financial documents, bribery, corruption, and money laundering amounting to over \$1.2 billion. These crimes involved Malabu Oil and Gas Limited, Shell Nigeria Ultra Deep (SNUD), Nigeria Agip Exploration (NAE), and their officials. In a related case, Punch (2021) reported that the DSS recovered various currencies totalling N270 million from the homes of three judges. Additionally, a judge in Rivers State allegedly hid \$2 million after Governor Nyesom Wike thwarted a raid on his residence (EFCC, 2019). Such incidents clearly demonstrate the weakness of institutions in upholding the rule of law in Nigeria.

Table 3

Date	Corruption	HDI (%)
2011	24	0.49



Source: Authors' Computation

2012	27	0.50
2013	25	0.50
2014	27	0.51
2015	26	0.52

Source: Countryeconomy (2025)

Also, the corruption index serves as a proxy to measure institutional reforms. Table 3 shows that it remained static at 24 points in 2011, increased to 27 points in 2014, suggesting modest progress in anti-corruption efforts, then decreased to 26 points in 2015. Therefore, only a 2-point increase was recorded from 2011 to 2015. Among the objectives of the plan was to ensure that the nation's human resource endowment is knowledgeable, skilled, productive, and healthy, enabling the optimal exploitation and utilization of other resources to foster growth and development. The figures on the Human Development Index in Table 3 shows a steady increase in human capital development in Nigeria from 2011 to 2015. However, only 8.16% increase was recorded within the implementation period of the plan in 5 years.

4.3 The Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) 2017 – 2020

According to the document, the ERGP has three broad strategic objectives that will help achieve the vision of inclusive growth:

- (1) Restoring growth: the Plan focuses on achieving macroeconomic stability and economic diversification.
- (2) Investing in our (the Nigeria) people; The ERGP promised to invest in the Nigerian people by increasing social inclusion, creating jobs and improving the human capital base of the economy.
- (3) Building a globally competitive economy: The ERGP aimed at tackling the obstacles hindering the competitiveness of Nigerian businesses, notably poor or non-existent infrastructural facilities and the difficult business environment. It will increase competitiveness by investing in infrastructure and improving the business environment.

Tale 4

Year	GDP	HDI	Unemployment	Ease of Doing Business
2017	3.76E+11	0.52	9.84	145
2018	4.22E+11	0.53	10.21	146
2019	4.75E+11	0.54	10.42	131
2020	4.32E+11	0.54	10.85	131

Sources

GDP: World Bank

HDI: Countryeconomy.com

Unemployment: World Bank

Ease of Doing Business: Statista

Table 4 shows a steady increase in GDP from 2017 to 2019, followed by a contraction in 2020, which can be attributed to the COVID-19 lockdown. Similarly, the Human Capital Index increased steadily from 52 in 2017 to 54 in 2020. Surprisingly, the youth

unemployment rate increased during this period of experienced GDP growth. And finally, Nigeria's rank on ease of doing business improved from 145 to 131 across 190 countries in the years 2017 and 2020, respectively.

4.4 National Development Plan 2021 – 2025
 According to the NDP document (2021), the overall target of the Plan is to achieve (1) a broad-based real GDP growth rate of about 5% on average during the plan period; (2) increased employment generation of about 21 million jobs; and (3) through an inclusive growth in lifting 35 million people out of poverty over the plan period (2021-2025). This will set the

stage for achieving the government’s target of lifting 100 million Nigerians out of poverty in 10 years under the National Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (NPRGS). Other objectives include to establish a strong foundation for a diversified economy, with robust MSME growth, and a more-resilient business environment, and to enable a vibrant, educated, and healthy population.

Table 5

Year	GDP	Unemployment	Poverty Rate	HDI
2021	4.41E+11	9.05	63	0.54
2022	4.77E+11	6.01	63	0.55
2023	3.64E+11	5.13	38.9	0.56
2024	1.88E+11	5.05	56	

GDP: *World Bank*

Youth Unemployment: *World Bank*

HDI: *the Global Economy*

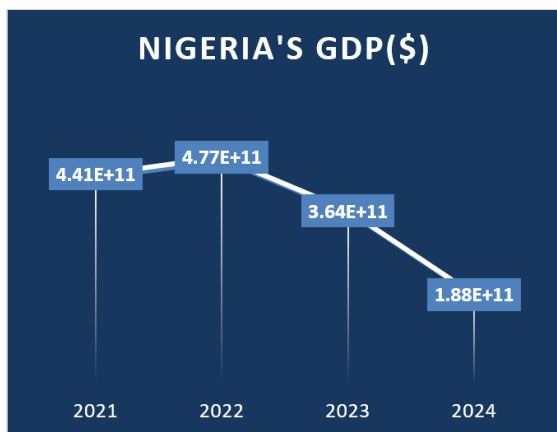
Table 5 indicates that Nigeria’s gross domestic product (GDP) contracted significantly from 2022 to 2024, following an initial increase from 2021 to 2022 when measured in US dollars. In contrast, GDP trends in naira may differ due to the currency’s floating exchange rate, as reported by the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics.

Development Index (HDI) are not available for 2024 and 2025.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that most of the objectives of these development plans were not achieved during the periods under review. A poor implementation culture and endemic corruption, especially in the poverty reduction programs, hindered progress. This led to the dismissal of the humanitarian minister in 2024. Additional problems included politicized policies, the appointment of incompetent persons to manage the programs, and setting unrealistic goals that sounded more like wishful dreams. These factors ultimately fuelled disappointment and inhibited the successful implementation of these plans.



Source: Authors' Computation

Notably, youth unemployment declined steadily during this period despite the reduction in GDP. The poverty rate remained high at 63% when GDP was elevated in 2021 and 2022, but decreased as GDP declined in 2023. These patterns suggest a disconnect between economic growth and development, and point to a lack of inclusive growth within the Nigerian economy. Human capital development improved incrementally, rising from 54% in 2021 to 55% in 2022 and 56% in 2023. Data for the Human

Another problem observed is the institutional failure. Institutions of governance are becoming weaker day by day resulting to poor execution of government policies. The legislative arm of government that is supposed to serve as the supervisory arm is highly compromised. Equally, the last hope of the common man, the judiciary as reported by the EFCC (2019) has made justice for the highest bidder with many cases of compromised and abused of justice reported.

Although the economy grew from 2003 to 2007 and from 2011 to 2014, this can only be attributed to the crude oil price increase during these periods. This means the promises made regarding economic

diversification from oil have not been fulfilled, with the country still heavily reliant on crude oil for foreign exchange earnings. Additionally, economic growth didn't translate into significant employment generation, HDI improvement, or poverty reduction. As the economy grows, so does unemployment paradoxically, as can be observed from the data. Dissidents often experience severe deprivation, multidimensional, and household poverty, with the recent MPI survey by the NBS reporting 63%, 133 million Nigerians are multidimensionally poor, reaching unprecedented levels, pushing them into destitution.

Furthermore, the development plans failed to achieve its macroeconomic objectives, with inflation today at 33%, and the exchange rate at 1500 naira to the dollar. Slogans, rhetoric, and well-crafted documents are considered cheap talk and ineffective administrative exercise when outcomes consistently diverge from stated objectives. Finally, the well-drafted development plans documents in Nigeria are like soap bubbles, so beautiful with no substance.

5.2 Recommendations

- I. Development plans should be designed to tackle the challenges of a few sectors at a time, which are critical and have transcendent effects on the other sectors. For example, in Nigeria, energy primacy, manufacturing, insecurity, and corruption can be targeted because no nation can achieve development without reliable energy, manufacturing capacity, adequate safety, and public trust.
- II. The bottom-up development strategy should be adopted in future development plans. This is because it is community-led and ensures inclusive growth, which will reduce the multidimensional poverty witnessed in the country, rather than the elite-led trickle-down approach that growth may not translate to development, as shown by our data. This approach hampers corruption and increases income inequality.
- III. The improvement of Human Capital Development should be the main concern of any development plan. Because economic growth without corresponding progress in the HCD reveals a clear lack of inclusive growth, income inequality, capital flight, leakages, and corruption persist in the economic system.

- IV. Palliatives and other social welfare packages should be excluded from these development plans. Emphasis should be placed on industrialization and the provision of capital goods to achieve sustainable poverty reduction. Single-digit credit facilities should be made available to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) following thorough evaluation, rather than relying on palliatives.
- V. Punitive measures should be taken against those who contributed to the failures of these development plans. In modern history, countries like Singapore and China, where these plans have been successfully implemented, have zero tolerance for inefficiencies and corruption.

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